The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR HOWARD K. WALKER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is November 14, 2001. This is an interview with Howard K. Walker. This is being done by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Howard?

WALKER: Yes.

Q: Let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me where and when you were born and a little about your parents?

WALKER: I was born in Newport News, Virginia, in 1935. At that time, my father was teaching mathematics and chemistry at a local high school. My father was from Newport News. My mother was from Williamson, West Virginia. They had met when he was still at Howard University, where he graduated magna cum laude in civil engineering and business management, and my mother was living in Philadelphia. They married and settled in Newport News.

Q: Where did the Walker family come from?

WALKER: How far back shall we go? My father was born in Newport News. His father was an attorney there, and had originally come from Charlottesville. His mother was from Culpepper, Virginia.

Q: Where did your mother's family come from?

WALKER: She was born and grew up in West Virginia. Her father came from Italy, and her mother's family were German and Irish.

Q: Did she go to college?

WALKER: She went for a while in West Virginia, but didn't finish.

Q: 1935. You were born just when the Depression was really kicking in. But your father had a job. Where was he teaching?

WALKER: He was teaching at a high school in Newport News, Huntington High School.

Q: Did you grow up in Newport News?

WALKER: Shortly after I was born, we moved to Hampton, next door. My father got a job as a manager of a new, experimental public housing project. That was very interesting. It was one of the projects of the New Deal and was targeted at shipyard workers who had come up from North Carolina and other neighboring places. This housing project developed into an interesting thing. The brick houses were individual units with half an acre plots. Those were the days of victory gardens in World War II. Everyone had one, along with chickens that were kept in chicken houses on each plot. There was an agricultural extension agent to show people how to raise these gardens and chickens. There were nurses to help people improve their health and health facilities. So, it was a real community, sort of like Greenbelt, Maryland.

Q: There were a number of Greenbelt communities around.WALKER: That's right. Aberdeen Gardens.

Q: Was the Navy a big part of your life?

WALKER: Not directly, but maritime affairs was important to anyone growing up around Newport News and Norfolk because of the Norfolk Navy base and the Newport News shipyard which was the major industry there, building warships and then launching a liberty ship almost every month, was. But no one in my family was a naval person.

Q: Where did you go to school?

WALKER: The local schools. I went to elementary school in Aberdeen and for the 6th grade in Newport news. Because my birthday is in December, I had to wait until I was nearly 7 before I was allowed to begin the school system in Aberdeen, and I changed to the Newport News school system in the 7th grade, because they allowed me to skip a grade and catch up with my age group. Then I went to Huntington High School in Newport News. Afterwards, I went to the University of Michigan.

Q: At the elementary school level, do you recall any teachers or subjects that struck you?

WALKER: Not really. I never felt challenged there.

Q: How about in high school?

WALKER: In high school, I was very much influenced by the English teachers, Charles Jones and Ms. Peace who introduced me to good literature, good poetry, and hard work. There was a coach, Thad Madden, who was football and track coach. I was never big enough to play football, but he was a sort of hero because he was one of the best of his kind. I didn't play football, but I played on the tennis, baseball, and basketball teams.Q: What were your interests?

WALKER: Girls.

Q: Many of our Foreign Service officers majored in girls and sports.

WALKER: I think I was even at that stage interested in things far away. I had never heard of the Foreign Service. I had heard vaguely of diplomacy. But one of the things I can remember in high school was thinking I wanted to get out of Newport News and see what else was in the world. My awareness of and interest in the world at large, international affairs, really didn't get started until I went off to university. My earliest memory of being aware of international affairs was when I was five to seven years old and kept a map on my bedroom wall of Europe and Asia and plotted the advances of the war. But my first real memory of having interest in foreign affairs was in the 6th grade. There was a teacher, Ms. Dorothy Palmer, who taught a civics course. We had to memorize all of the acronyms of the new United Nations organization and what they did. I memorized those and got to know something about them. I have memories of seeing hungry people in India, for example, but nothing substantive.

Q: How about reading? Were you a reader?

WALKER: I wasn't a big reader when I was young B newspapers, magazines, but I can't think of a favorite author.

Q: You were getting ready to graduate high school about when?

WALKER: 1953.

Q: You said you went to the University of Michigan. Was this to get away from Newport News?

WALKER: In large part, yes. As an Afro-American, I could not attend the University of Virginia at that time, and other local colleges that were after me were not appealing. One man who I admired very much in the community, a medical doctor, a thoracic surgeon, Waldo Scott, had studied in Ann Arbor. He was a friend of the family and a member of the school board. He talked about it a lot to me. It had a great football team. Those two things - a good academic record and a fun guy like Waldo Scott, whose son is a member of Congress now - and a wish to get away for a while and see some other parts of the world led me to Ann Arbor. My mother tried to get me to apply to Harvard and Yale, but no one in my high school did, and the importance of those places in getting a step up in adult life did not register with me at the time.

Q: Were you there for the full four years?

WALKER: I was in Ann Arbor for four years and stayed on there another year for an MA.

Q: What were you taking when you went back?

WALKER: I went there originally to begin a premed career. I went to my first chemistry class and said, "My goodness, these people have studied things two years beyond what I studied in my chemistry course in Newport News." I took chemistry and physics and all the hard courses my high school offered at the time, but I was so far behind others at Michigan in that. So, I switched my major. I was taking a political science course at the time and found that absolutely fascinating. So, I dropped the chemistry and took geology as my science course. Michigan was a huge university. I was in a huge geology class. We went on our first field trip with some 300 people. I think I was one of the few who didn't find a fossil. I didn't go into geology. But political science was interesting. The professors were first rate. So, I switched my major to that.

Q: Did you find yourself concentrating on any particular area in political science?

WALKER: No. As a political science major, you had American government, comparative government, introduction to political theory. My sophomore year, I took my first international relations course and really got bitten by that. So, I took more of those later on, particularly regional specialty courses. Then I was invited into the honors program in political science. That got us into a lot of reading more widely in theory in whichever direction we wanted to go. I did my honors thesis on what was then the beginning federation in the Caribbean of the former British territories there. I went all over the map in my courses. I took a course in Far Eastern international relations, the Middle East. When I graduated, I didn't quite know what I was going to do except to fulfill my ROTC Air Force obligation. I didn't have 20/20 vision, so I couldn't fly, which was the reason I joined the Air Force ROTC. The Air Force could not send me to its navigator's school until the February after my graduation, so that summer I talked a couple of newspapers in Michigan into agreeing to which columns I would write that summer on the coming Caribbean federation during a trip I planned there. Then, as I was waiting to go there, I thought, "Why don't I go back and pick up an MA before I go?" I wasn't to go into the Air Force for 7 months. I said, "I can ask the Air Force to wait for me and pick up an MA." So, I wrote to the honors faculty advisor and he got me some money to return to the University of Michigan, and I went back and did an MA.

That was a turning point in a way. That year, my professor of my introductory international relations course decided to develop a specialty in Africa, which was just beginning to be newsworthy at that time. I guess he was looking for some upward mobility within academia that he could latch onto. He went to Africa and came back and gave a course, and I took it. I found that fascinating. Then it was time to do my Air Force obligation, but I noticed on the bulletin board one day there was an African studies center at Boston University and they invited graduate students to apply for fellowships. I said, "I have four months before I report for active duty in the Air Force. Why don't I send off this application," and it was granted. They gave me a fellowship. The Air Force decided they wouldn't mind having somebody who knew something about that part of the world, so they gave me an extension of my active duty date to go to graduate school at Boston University. I went there and began the Ph.D. program without a notion at that time that I wanted to invest that much time in further study. Boston was an interesting place to live. The study of Africa was rather interesting. So, I went there and began. I stayed on and did a Ph.D. I didn't get a degree in African studies but rather in government and economics.

Q: What was your dissertation subject?

WALKER: I wanted to do it on Julius Nyerere's political movement in Tanzania. The Ford Foundation, to which I applied for a grant for that, didn't think that I could do it, didn't think I could have the access in Tanzania at that period. That was in the late '50s. So I didn't get that grant. I said, "Well, I've been reading about Ghana a lot." In fact, the professor at Michigan, Henry Burton, who taught this Africa course, had done his research in Ghana. I got interested not so much in the major nationalist movement of Kwame Nkrumah, but in his opposition, the intellectual middle class groups who began the independence movement before Nkrumah came back from Lincoln University. I got interested in them and wanted to go over and do that. But again, Ford thought that I couldn't have the access that I needed. I said, "Well, it's interesting enough that I'll do it anyhow." So, I did a library dissertation on the documents. I did it on the relationship between the radical nationalist movement of Kwame Nkrumah and this more middle class intellectual political opposition.

Q: I'd like to capture the spirit of the times. You were doing this from '58 to when?

WALKER: From '58 until I did the Air Force in early '62.

Q: This was when the bloom was still on the rose regarding Africa. This was the brave new world. When you were talking to people and doing your research, how were you doing developments in a place like Ghana and also Tanzania?

WALKER: I think everyone was full of optimism at that time. Also, you felt you were doing good works. People who were down and on the way up... You weren't playing a role in that, but you were helping to describe it somewhat. There was a good deal of optimism. The African Studies Center in Boston, as at places like Northwestern and California... This was at a time when there was growing interest in Africa not only in academia but in government. This was a time when we had National Defense fellowships, as we had several of them in Boston. The first Foreign Service officer I ever met in my life I met there, several of them who the State Department had sent there, as well as other centers around to study. I learned more about the Foreign Service and began to get interested in it. One guy was there, Jeff Frederick... This was his academic year away and he was going back in. There was another guy there named Jim Ferrell. He was still in as well. Then there was a third one whose name I've forgotten by now, but he had been in Uganda and decided to leave the Foreign Service. I didn't find out why. I wish I had at that time. Since he left the Foreign Service, he got a Ford grant and went out and did a lot of research on Uganda. It was fascinating to see it. He came back with footlockers full of notes. I thought that represented a pretty systematic and thorough approach by Foreign Service officers. The mood at that time was very international. At the Center, there were not only Americans but a number of Africans and a number of people from other parts of the world - French and others. So, I was getting a real look at a cosmopolitan setting at that time. There was also some involvement. I remember very vividly having a friend, another student there, a guy named Ashraf Defaraysu, who was a member of the presidential guard in Ethiopia. He had gone back one of those years and was apparently involved in a coup attempt against the Emperor. I read that he was sentenced to be executed for that. I decided to try to stop that. I set up with another person a card table in front of the African Studies Center to take students' signatures to petition the government of Ethiopia not to execute our former fellow student. I remember, I was called in by the dean and told that I shouldn't do that. Why? The dean said he had been in touch with the State Department, who advised that this would not be a helpful thing to do. That soured me on the State Department. Needless to say, I went right back to my card table and collected more signatures. So, that was part of the color at the time.

One of my professors, an economics professor, Mark Karp, who also was associated with the African Studies Center, gave a course on development economics. Mark was a very strong market economist who believed in the merits of a free market for development, which in the time of the '60s and in the context of the people who went into things like development studies and African studies, was thought to be almost reactionary. I still remember our getting into heated discussions in class and thinking that he really was some Neanderthal kind of person arguing on behalf of the wealth accumulated by multinational corporations and how they shouldn't be restrained for social reasons because that interfered with their being engines of growth. We all thought that was terribly reactionary. I've often thought of Mark Clark's lectures from time to time. During my career, I saw what some of the consequences of strong socialist economic policies were in places like Africa and realized how students sometimes should listen a little more carefully to professors who have different views.

Q: It is an interesting thing, how this planned economy and controlled economy was so popular and turned out to be pretty much a disaster in Africa.

WALKER: Part of the reason why we didn't understand that at the time is because the curriculum wasn't set up well enough to see the symbioses between economic policy and the political system. Socialism failed not only because it had certain false assumptions about the nature of Man, what motivates and drives them, but also because it depended on strong government having strong control. We would have been better served at that time - and my students when I teach today I think are served - by drawing the connection between the economics of socialism and the politics of socialism. It's a question not only of does the market allocate resources better than democracy does. But it's also a question of Acton's disease coming in any system where a ruler has too much power.

Q: Boston University was for that period in the late '50s either the only or the preeminent African studies place because there was no competition.

WALKER: Professor Herskovits at Northwestern University would have disagreed. Boston University at that time, its African Studies Center, was headed by Bill Brown, who had once been head of INR's Africa program. That was a time when it was Africa, the Middle East, and a number of other things. I think Bill brought with him a lot of resources, human and money, which he was able to get from the Ford Foundation because of his professional experience. We probably had bigger resources at that time. Herskovits was probably the better scholar. In California a few years later at Berkeley with Jim Coleman and that was about it.

Q: We were sending some people at about the same time to Oxford. That was one of the few places that was cranking up to recognize Africa.

WALKER: The School of Oriental Studies.

Q: Did the Foreign Service cross your mind? You had your military obligation to take care of.

WALKER: I was thinking of it after I had met Jeff Frederick and some of the other Foreign Service officers at the African Studies Center. The State Department recognizes today one of the benefits of sending out diplomats to universities is that students can see what it's like. So, I began to think about it at that time, but I knew I had this three year ROTC obligation in the Air Force. I was still young enough at the time, still in my early 20s, that there were a number of options out there. So, I went into the Air Force. At that time, the Foreign Service probably was in the back of my mind. But let me back up. There was another time earlier than that when I thought of the Foreign Service. One of my fellow students in the political science honors seminar at the University of Michigan, Dick Booth, had his eyes set on the Foreign Service and taking the Foreign Service Exam. We all graduated together and Dick went to Tufts' Fletcher School to prepare for the examination. We got together when I went to Boston. Dick didn't pass the exam. I think he took it about three times before he did. I began to wonder, "Here is a guy in the honors seminar with me, a pretty bright guy, a little brash but very bright, and he wasn't able to pass the exam. Maybe there is something really insurmountable about that." But then when I met Jeff Frederick and the others at Boston who had passed the exam, I said, "Well, that's doable." But anyhow, I went off to the Air Force. I couldn't be a pilot because of my eyes. So, I went in and decided not to be a navigator because that would commit me to five years and I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do yet but I knew I didn't want to do that. So, they made me a senior training officer at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. I had visions of teaching at the time, but actually supervised NCOs, who trained a bunch of recruits how to march and how to make up their beds.

Q: I am a graduate of the Lackland school in 1950.

WALKER: That's where I wrote my letter to Ted Kennedy saying, "I feel I can contribute more than this to my country in the Air Force. Help." I guess he or his office wrote a letter or made a phone call. He did something. It wasn't long before I got a call from Washington saying, "We're going to give you the opportunity to go to the Paris of the East." I said, "Where is that?" They said, "Saigon." I said, "I don't think so." It was not for ideological reasons against the Vietnam War, but I thought either the Viet Cong would kill me or my wife would. So, I turned that down. They said, "Alright, then we'll send you to Stead Air Force Base just north of Reno. You'll be an intelligence officer." I said, "That's kind of interesting, getting my teeth into some substantive things again." Instead, I was put with a unit to train flight crews on how to survive if they were shot down. That was just great fun. I'm a hiker and a camper. You took them up into the Sierra Nevadas and taught them how to survive off the land for a while. Oddly enough, we were taking these crews who were headed for Southeast Asia and teaching them in the Nevada winter how to make snowshoes out of pine tree branches and what have you. I did that for a couple of months, just enough to enjoy the Sierra Nevadas. Then they shifted me to another unit that trained more specialized crews on how to survive long-term detention. These were crews flying intelligence missions. That included as part of the curriculum not only physical things that some other people taught but teaching them something about the major political conflicts in the world, particularly about the ideology of communism and the perspectives of those who might capture and interrogate them. I found that kind of interesting. It also got me traveling TDY to a number of different places in the world in which these special crews flew. After about a year, it was time to get out.

Q: You mentioned your wife. You got married?

WALKER: I met my wife in Boston. She was an undergraduate student at Boston University. She was the vice president of the Cosmopolitan Club, which was a club of international students. She was American, but she had always been interested in that. That's one of the things that attracted me to her, that she was interested in international things. They were having a dance and needed a chaperone. I was a graduate student and that gave me credentials of responsibility. As far as she was concerned, it was like putting the fox with the chickens. We started dating and were married in September of 1960. A year or so later, our son, Gregory, was born in Boston.

Q: I had been an enlisted man. I graduated from college and went to get my master's degree at Boston University in history. This was 1954-'55. I sat next to a pretty girl in my first Russian history class. She lives out here in Annandale and I'll see her this evening.

WALKER: I finished my coursework and passed my Ph.D. written and oral qualifying exams in '61 and began doing research on my dissertation. In '62, the Air Force said it was time to start with them. One of the things that had always been in the back of my mind since I went off to Michigan was to go back into my father's business. My father at the end of World War II had gone into business for himself in insurance and real estate. One of the things that crossed my mind was to go back and go into business with him. This occurred to me when I was first studying political science at Michigan and thinking, "Well, I really do like this politics stuff. Maybe I'll go back to Newport News and go into business with him and go into politics." That idea stayed with me. That was one thought I had in the Air Force. But an interesting thing happened that turned me off that path. I was back visiting my parents once when I was still in the Air Force. I had to go back to Washington for something. I was talking with my dad on the back porch about things we might do in the business. It became clear to me that my ideas of the scope of the business' activities were much larger than what he was thinking. His were probably more solid, but I was thinking of major kinds of statewide expansion of the business, which wouldn't be bad for my political career. After that meeting, I decided, "No, this probably won't work." So, I went back and started thinking of other things. When I was about to get out of the Air Force, I started casting around. I wrote to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for a staff position and found that that was really peopled by old men, people my age today, who were not particularly interested in making waves. I wrote to them. I wrote to AID. I had an interview with AID. I'm not clear in my own mind to this day why I also didn't write to take the Foreign Service Exam. I don't know if I was still discouraged by my friend Dick Booth's experience or if I didn't know enough about it. Part of it was I thought at that stage I could enter at a higher level if I went into AID or something else than at entry level at State. I came to Washington for an interview for that. I think I was on track for one of AID's management intern positions. I had a very long oral examination, which I thought went well. But for budgetary reasons that didn't work out. Another place I wrote was the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] for an analyst position. They came back right away with a very good offer and said, "Come and join us." But still that was a wait of three or four months for security clearances after I got out of the Air Force. We drove back east from Nevada, my wife and son, and by that time we had a daughter, Wendy. She, Greg, Terry, and I drove back in our little Volkswagen Beetle across the country and spent some time with my parents in Newport News and her parents in Wilmington, Delaware. I'm sure her parents must have thought, "My God, what in the world has our daughter done? She's now got two children and a husband without a job!" But anyhow, I went down and took this job at the Agency as an analyst on the DDI [Deputy Director for Intelligence] side of the house. They had me looking at Africa, since that was what I had studied. That was kind of interesting. First of all, it was the first time I had really read diplomatic despatches, cables and other kinds of information that could come, and I found I was pretty good at that, at analyzing and assessing it. It was there that I really learned to write. I had written a dissertation. I was reading it the other day. I had nothing better to do. What a bunch of bull. It was just long winded. But I really learned to write at the Agency succinctly in all different kinds of formats. From there I decided to look closer at the Foreign Service. I saw that as an interesting career dealing with issues that interested me. The CIA job brought me more in contact with people in the foreign affairs community including people from the Foreign Service. I was impressed with them, but not overly impressed. It wasn't something that I felt I couldn't do and do well. So, I took the Foreign Service Exam and came in.

Q: This was when?

WALKER: I came into the Foreign Service in 1968 or '69. The exam I took was a lateral entry exam. By that time, I had moved up in the Agency and didn't really want to take several steps down in income. I was invited to take this lateral entry exam. It was an oral examination. It was quite a good examination.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

WALKER: Yes, I do. This was at the time of Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, and I was asked a question about that. In preparing for the exam, this was a topical item, so I anticipated it might be something to look at - East-West relations - and I did some reading on it. Many years later as a Foreign Service officer between assignments, I spent a few months over at the Board of Examiners examining candidates to become Foreign Service officers. I often thought then about my oral examination. I became more impressed with my own examination. I don't remember who was on it now. I remember this question about a new approach to East-West relations and what I thought about Willy Brandt's policy.

Q: While you were at the CIA, were you dealing with Africa?

WALKER: I was dealing with Africa and parts of Europe. One of the major things I was following was Rhodesia. I worked very closely with our European colleagues. One of the colleagues at that time was my counterpart working on Britain's Rhodesia aspect, Jannone Walker. We used to see ourselves in the hall and referred to ourselves as "cousins." We lost contact until I was back in Washington for my briefings to go out as ambassador to Togo. I looked in an office walking down the Department corridors one day and saw Jannone sitting in an office in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. Then I ran into her again when I came back, jumping way ahead in my career, from Madagascar, where I had been ambassador. I was back to be vice president of National Defense University. That was just as Clinton had won his election and was making his appointments. He had appointed Jannone to the NSC staff dealing with Europe. I ran into her again at a dinner where she spoke about the Balkans. I saw her the last time just when I left the National Defense University to go as deputy commandant to the NATO Defense College in Rome. It was at the Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington where I was studying Italian and Jannone was studying Czech to go off as ambassador to the Czech Republic.

Q: You came in in '68 or '69. Do you recall your Foreign Service class?

WALKER: NI was a lateral entry.

Q: Did you get any training?

WALKER: None at all, and that was a mistake. I was put right on a desk in the Bureau of African Affairs in what was then called AFI [Inter-Africa Affairs]. I was in charge of African UN matters under Fred Hadsell, a fine officer. I was up to speed on that. I hit the ground running. I stayed there for almost a year. I then was to go out to the Congo, Zaire. They wanted to send me out as a labor officer. So, they sent me to FSI for French. The Department of Labor had a bit of a problem with my assignment. They wanted to send someone out from the Department of Labor. In any event, just as I was about to take my French language examination at FSI about two or there weeks before departing for Zaire, they said, "Well, we really want you to go to Lagos." The Biafra War was about to end. They wanted me to go out as political officer, number two in a three person political section. I said, "Alright, there goes all that time invested in French, but that might be pretty interesting." Besides, I thought at the time that I knew enough about the Foreign Service to think that this job as political officer would be interesting and probably better for my career than the other one." I knew absolutely nothing-

Q: When you were with AFI dealing with UN matters, were you the guy who tried to send out instructions to all the posts of how to get their countries to vote and all of that?

WALKER: Actually, no. That was more of the country desk. My real concern was liaisoning with IO [International Affairs] on how we should handle African matters at the UN and also with our Africa person up at the UN, who we would second there during the general session, drafting briefing papers for the sixth and seventh floors. But AFI doesn't have much field responsibility.

Q: Off you went to Lagos.

WALKER: Yes.

Q: This was from when to when?

WALKER: I left the first part of January 1970. We had just sold our first house and bought another one, which we still have. So, off we went to Lagos for me to be the number two in the Political Section. I said, "My god, I've never had a foreign posting. I don't know what to do. I know how to assess reports, but I don't really know how to write a report." I always thought, "Why would they do this without a little short course in knowing what reporting formats are?" One guy I grew to admire was Bill Whitman, who had been our ambassador in Togo. I said, "Bill, I've got to go to lunch with you. I don't know how to do this." So, we went to the Foreign Service club for lunch. It still had a dining room then. I said, "How am I going to get anybody to tell me anything? How am I going to get them to tell me secrets? How am I going to get them to level with me? How am I going to get information?" He said, "Howard, anybody who knows anything wants other people to know that they know it." That turned out to be true. I went to Lagos. I found myself as the number two in a three person section, supervising a Foreign Service officer on his second assignment. I won't name any names here, but it was at the time when the head of the section was a guy who had kind of given up. He was a bright guy who had done a book on Turkey, but he really wasn't going on all cylinders there. So, a lot of the leadership of the section came my way. You tend to either fall on your face or run very fast and get some good legs. I was given the responsibility for the former Biafra. But how do you develop contacts? I didn't know anything about that. My predecessor had left me, as I learned was the practice, the names and telephone numbers of some of his. He couldn't stay around very long after I arrived there. That was Fritz Picard, who had been sidetracked off of what was a very fast track career. But he left rather soon. But I picked up some of his contacts and found that Whitman was right: you ask them and they want to show you how much they know.

Q: You had this battle of Nigeria that went on in the Department of State and within our government over support of Biafra. You had a very strong contingent driven by staffers in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or something like that. It was a very viscous atmosphere over this and within the embassy. Our people who were serving in Biafra became true believers in the Biafran cause. Were you seeing any of the fallout of this when you got there?

WALKER: Not directly at my level. I did spend a month or two on the Nigeria desk before going out and that was very helpful. I tell you where I saw this. I don't know that I saw in the embassy any conflict between Biafra lovers and federal government lovers the way I later saw conflict in the embassy in South Africa, for example. It was a large embassy, particularly with our AID people. But I'll tell you very dramatically how this was brought home. The ambassador at the time was Bill Trueheart, a pro. He had been DCM in London and came to this job. He was good for me to have as my first ambassador. He wrote extremely well, did a lot of his own drafting. I attended his country team meetings, those that a second secretary (as I was) were allowed to attend, which were the larger once a week ones. But since I was the guy in the Political Section who for reasons I mentioned earlier was doing most of the section's writing, particularly most of the analysis, I saw more of the ambassador than sometimes second secretaries do. He would edit it with his comments on a lot of mine. But I saw the things he was drafting and they were really sharp. A big issue came up. I've forgotten now exactly the substance of the instruction, but the instruction from Washington was to go in to General Gowen, the head of the federal government, and deliver a very strong message from Washington on the treatment of the former Biafra. Bill Trueheart - as I learned in my career an ambassador sometimes confronts - felt this instruction was unwise both for U.S. interests in Nigeria and for reconciliation on Nigeria. It was this kind of thing that you were driving at. But at the same time, he was a real professional who understood that you don't just go back and tell Washington that this is hairbrained. You have to have an understanding of the dynamics back there that resulted in this instruction and make your point listened to in a way that shows that you have an appreciation of all the various considerations in Washington. I thought he sent back a telegram on this that made these points very well. He argued a substantive point that demonstrated an appreciation of the bureaucratic politics back in Washington in the making of foreign policy. But Bill, being the erudite person he was, had a sentence in there: "Alright, I will bell the cat." That just, we learned later, sent people back here bananas, Under Secretary Nick Katzenbach.

Q: He was number two.

WALKER: He was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. He hit the roof. I remember, he came out. I wasn't involved in any of the meetings, wasn't senior enough then even to be a control officer. But the message he brought to Trueheart was, "You carry out these instructions clearly or we'll get someone else." They very quickly did. They yanked this first class officer out of there. That was the end of his career. They sent him to Maxwell Air Force Base as diplomat in residence. Bill retired after that, a great loss. That was my first experience in the conflict of a policy between the field and Washington and the very tight rope that diplomats have to walk in managing that, have to walk not only for the future of their careers but also to get a fair hearing for their policy recommendations.

Q: This was the first African country, wasn't it?

WALKER: The first any foreign assignment.

Q: How did it strike you as a country and Lagos as a city?

WALKER: I was fascinated. When we got there, we landed... We went on the Pan Am Red Eye Special. We stopped for refueling in Casablanca. Mind you, this was in early 1970. You have to remember the fashions at the time. You got off the plane for a refreshment, my wife and two young children. My wife at that time had not a miniskirt but it was above the knee. That's what they were wearing. Well, we saw all of these people at the airport in Casablanca looking at the planes come in. We learned that the King was coming back from a trip. She and the other ladies were walking in in that fashion at the time and we began to hear these hisses of disapproval from the Moroccans. That was an experience.

We flew from there to Lagos. It was the first time I had seen West Africa. I had been to Africa when I was with the Agency as an analyst, just a field trip. It was impressive - these huge distances, especially if you flew over the Sahara. There was this huge, desolate desert. We had just gone over the ocean. I was struck by how much more difficult it was to transit that desert than the ocean. Things began to come together - why there was more connection and commerce and exchange of ideas and growth of ideas and commerce across the ocean than there was across that desert. I began to see physically why Africa south of the Sahara was as poor and undeveloped as it was. That transportation and communication route was just so difficult.

We landed in Lagos. This was about two days and two weeks after the end of the civil war. As the plane taxied down the runway, we looked out of the window and there were machine guns trained on us on the way in. A bit unsettling. We drove in to our house through this teeming city. The population density of Lagos is enormous. The poverty is abysmal. We drove in. This was my wife's first taste and my first taste. My predecessor met us at the airport and we drove to our house. He gave us the file on the house. The first couple of pages were reports of antelope knocking down the garage door. Our first night there, getting accustomed to geckos, these little visitors, coming up through the drainage of the sink... One of the big adjustments was that it was the first time in my life I had ever had a servant. He came in and said, "Welcome, Master." I said, "The first thing is that I don't want you to call me 'Master.' I don't like it." I gave him all the historic reasons. I said, "I'd like you to call me Mr. Walker or whatever. But don't call me 'Master.'" He said, "Yes, Master." But we were able to stop that quickly.

What were my other impressions? Teeming people. Poverty. But friendly, easy to get to know. What was for Africa a large diplomatic community at that time.

Q: What were you doing? What was your actual assignment?

WALKER: Within the embassy, it turned out that it was running the Political Section. My portfolio was Biafra. So, I developed contacts among the Biafran or Ibo community in Lagos, got to know them and what was on their minds and what they thought about developments and reconciliation going on. That was a lot of my reporting. Also getting to know people, other than Ibo, from eastern Nigeria and seeing how they thought about how that part of the country ought to fit together - and then a couple of field trips out there as well. The first time I went to Biafra I was looking for the big swollen bellies and the red hair from edema and these other illnesses associated with the war and starvation. I didn't see that. I saw some symbols of the war that I had read about in despatches. There were secret runways where the sanction breaker aircraft came in. I saw Ibos digging out their tennis rackets that they had buried during the war and playing tennis in their tennis whites. I thought, "Well, you're getting a firsthand look at how things on the ground are different from the reports you sometimes read, particularly in the media." I got my first experience with missionaries traveling through eastern Nigeria. They were generally an impressive and dedicated bunch of people.Q: Had the missionaries for the most part been supportive of the Biafran revolt?

WALKER: Well, it varied. I'm thinking back... The Catholic missionaries very much were. There were a lot of Pentecostal and others who were simply adapting.

Q: The Catholic missionaries were mostly French, weren't they?

WALKER: No, not in Nigeria.

Q: France got very much involved, I thought, in supporting the Biafrans.

WALKER: Well, they did, but not for religious reasons. De Gaulle had his own axe to grind. He still bore a grudge that Nigeria held together whereas French speaking West Africa did not. There was some commercial interest in the oil of eastern Nigeria. But, no, the missionaries... It's an English speaking country.

Q: But sometimes you have Catholics who are coming out of non-national but maybe out of France speaking English.

WALKER: I don't remember that being a part of this.

Q: The friends of Biafra were saying, "This is going to be a huge bloodbath if the federal forces take over. It's going to be a great tragedy." Was that in the air or had that been dissipated by the time you got there?

WALKER: I certainly was aware of it from my time back here in Washington, that six weeks I spent on the desk. But I didn't feel as political officer in Nigeria the pressure of domestic human rights political opinion at home that I felt later in South Africa or even felt in Madagascar in dealing with something we can talk about later - human rights concerns. I didn't see that in Nigeria. Gowan had a pretty good policy of reconciliation at the time, of bringing Biafrans back in and reintegrating eastern Nigeria back into the federation.

Q: Was Gowan looked upon as a pretty good leader first from the American embassy point of view and then others?

WALKER: Yes, within the embassy. First of all because he did have a "no victor, no vanquished" policy. He wanted to keep the federation together and realized that he must do it by reintegrating and not occupying eastern Nigeria. He was also a member of a minority tribe himself in the middle belt. He wasn't a Hausa. I wasn't very much involved in my job with the policy and the implementation of our aid programs, but I don't remember hearing a notion among our AID people that the central government was not letting the eastern region get its due share of AID money. We had an awful lot going on food and that kind of basic human needs help.

Q: Did you find that when you went to Nigeria you got immersed in tribal politics?

WALKER: Oh, very much so. I was the eastern Nigerian person. We had a consulate in the north where I later became principal officer. They were following the Hausa-Fulani politics. We had a consulate in Ibadan, which was really our Yoruba politics people. I then came to take over as well the Midwest region of the Ibibios and around Nigerian Benin and the oil producing area . But you couldn't deal at all with any aspect of Nigerian politics without being concerned about the tribal politics dimension of it. Now, at that time, it was a military government. So, tribal politics did not have the scope for expression that it has when you have a legislature and open politics. ut nonetheless, it was there to some degree within the politics of the military and certainly within the politics of Nigerians thinking about after the military government, what? It was in the thinking about the structure of the federation. It was very much involved in the eastern region between the Ibos and the Ibibios. Everyone thinks that Biafra was populated by Ibos, but it was populated by these minority tribes as well. These minority tribes happened to sit on top of the oil deposits to the extent that they were on the ground. So, if Biafra in the USA was concerned about exploitation of Ibos by Hausa-Fulani, the Ibibios were concerned about exploitation by the Ibos. You got very much involved in that kind of thing. And subgroups and subclans of that. So, it was enough to keep someone new to embassy work very busy and interestingly so.

Q: Did you find that you could just sort of pick a person, a leader or somebody, and go out and see them?

WALKER: They would see you. One of the other things I learned that Ambassador Whitman didn't tell me, which is true, is that an American diplomat can see almost everyone because they want to be seen by an American diplomat. So, I found on my field trips out into the eastern region when I would request the local authorities to see someone, even the second secretary was able to see them and talk.

Q: Were you seeing people coming back together again? This was a delicate time.

WALKER: Coming back together again? I'm not sure they ever were that much together. What I did see was that there was still very much a feeling among the people in my portfolio of the east that we've got to get our act together and take care of ourselves. Even at that time, it was clear that there were going to be regions of smaller groups. There was a leading Ibo politician who was saying, "Our eastern region is a region in a hurry." Everyone was very much involved in developing their own part of Nigeria, not in a secessionist way anymore but just getting on with developing their own. There wasn't so much a sense of national reconciliation to be a member of the nation but just to get our own part of Nigeria going in a way that recognizes the reality of our having to live together with the same national government institutions.Q: The Hausa seem to be so completely different from the African.. They seem to be much more attached to the desert culture and all that.

WALKER: The big difference is all over Nigeria. I taught a course in comparative government and talked about Nigeria and the different cultural identities of people, the different personality types. The Ibos are the most cosmopolitan in the way that they quickly adapt to change and acquire the skills of change, partly because they didn't have as strong traditional societies, cultures, and structures that would hold them there as did the Yoruba in the west or certainly the Hausa in the north. There were differences.

But about this question of reconciliation... I saw the problems of reconciliation more later in my stay in Nigeria. I was in Lagos in the Political Section for the first year of my three year tour there. And then I was sent as principal officer to our consulate in Kaduna in the north. It happened in an interesting way. The principal officer there had his tour curtailed for reasons I don't want to get into. It was curtailed. This was a pretty good assignment. You're a principal officer in a consulate responsible for an area bigger than most of the countries in Africa and with a bigger population and all the rest of it. Ambassador Trueheart said, "I would like you to go up there." He told me he was impressed with my reporting and analysis and development of contacts and that was what he wanted to see up there. So, he recommended to the Assistant Secretary for Africa, David Newsom, that I go. Newsom was a pro himself. As I later learned, he wasn't sure about this idea because I was so new to the Foreign Service, but he agreed to it. So, I went up as principal officer. That was a bigger change for me than my first assignment going to Lagos. Here suddenly I had to meet the press interested in who was the new American consul coming up, photographs of me and my wife, going up and being met not only by the consulate staff but by the local television and newspapers and so on. This is a new Foreign Service in a way doing that. To have one year on the job in the field... Driver, car, nice residence, all of the accoutrements, perks, that go with the added responsibilities. But I got into this question of going up to Kaduna in the context of Nigerian reconciliation. It was the first time I really saw - more so than when I went to Biafra - the problems of reconciliation. We had arranged to come up with us the lady who worked in our house as a maid and nanny. She went up with us. She was a little apprehensive, but I said, "You'll be living right on the compound with us." She went up and told me the problems she was having. She was Christian and Ibo. Not overly dramatic, but I had not seen that before. Then I learned of the different people living in different parts of town. I sensed in a number of different ways that this question of reconciliation and a sense of different people, people who thought of themselves as different from each other, more strongly in the north. Of course, later on, it became tragically expressed in riots and killings and so on that still go on to this day.

Q: How did you find dealing with the authorities in the north?

WALKER: Again, I was the American consul. That was a great incentive for them to deal with me. I found the people of the north, the authorities and regular people, greatly different, much more reserved, not unfriendly, but more difficult to get to know. The Ibos are cosmopolitan. The Yorubas are a nation of used car salesmen personality types - outgoing, backslapping. One of the ways I remember is, when I would go on R&R from the north, none of my friends there ever asked me to bring back anything for them. When I went on R&R in Lagos, one of my friends, a Yoruba, asked me to bring something back. I said, "What's that?" He said, "A windshield." I can't get that in my suitcase. I don't mean that as a pejorative comment. It's just that I was his friend; I was going back; this is what you ask people to do. In the north, they're very reserved and wouldn't think of asking anything like that. So, that was one part of it. The other was entertaining. Very rarely did you get an invitation to someone's home in the north. When they came to your house, if it was a mixed gender thing, they had several wives in a Muslim area - and one would be the wife for the ex-pats. She could speak some English or do some other things that would blend in with the other guests. But they were much more difficult to meet. But yet some of our most lasting friends in Nigeria we met up in the north, very genuine friends. Another difference is just calling on the emirs. It's like going back to the days of Ivanhoe. I'll never forget when I called on the Emir of Kono, an interesting guy. He was a thoroughly modern man who had been Nigeria's ambassador to Senegal. But his call came to be the Emir of Kono and he knew what the better job was. So, he went back to that job of Emir of Kono. I called on him and was taken into a separate building where guests waited. In Kono it was hot. It can get to be 104-110 degrees up there. But with these thick walls, it's very cool. You wait and then are told when the Emir is ready to receive you. You walk through this garden where these guys are out there rolling on the grass in these beautifully colored gowns shouting things, singing the praises of the Emir. They're paid praise singers. I told the story to my staff when I went back, as an example of the way they should behave. So that was different to see that - not only the Emir, but the Sultan of Sokoto. We were able to get the Apollo 11 astronauts to visit. I had invited people from all over the north, including emirs. They all wanted to outdo each other. The Sultan of Sokoto came down in his Rolls Royce with his musicians holding these 12 foot trumpets blowing all the way down. So, that's part of the color.

Q: I always think of these horsemen dressed in...

WALKER: For the Durbars, yes. They had a great deal of that for the visit of Haile Selassie. You'd see these horses dressed as splendidly as the men, the Emirs with the umbrellas over them, and the snake charmers. The North's Hausa-Fulani embraced this Ivanhoe kind of pageantry, but also some of the northern minority tribes. They would be in the parade as well along with the splendidly dressed Emir and his horse and his court. You would see these guys coming from the bush whose talent was to expand their bellies half their size, the snake charmers, the acrobats, and so on. Great show. That one was for Haile Selassie and the governor of the state where we were, gave him a garden party reception. I remember going to meet Selassie and shook his hand and he had the most penetrating eyes I've ever seen.Q: What were our interests up in the north? Was it just monitoring?

WALKER: It was. We had no real commercial interests at that time. Peanuts were the major export. We did some sales but not very much. It was political listening because, look, the north dominated the army and there were a couple of major military installations up there. I got to know the commanders of those very well. It was going around vast distances to all of the centers of government up there and having our presence felt and picking up what understanding one could of the north's agenda in federal government issues and federal politics issues but also among friends. I mentioned that I got to know a number of the military leaders well up there. One experience was particularly instructive to me for the rest of my career. I got to know a guy named General Bisala who lived just up the street from me. He was commander at the major military installation in the north, which was in Kaduna. What a fascinating man. He was a neighbor. I'd walk by and I would often find him after lunch sitting home listening to classical music and reading some things I wish I had read when I was a much younger man. He was experimenting with raising different kinds of turkeys and vegetables on his compound. He was a very well cultivated man. He would talk to me regarding his responsibilities and confidentialities, and we would talk in an open way. I first met at his house a certain colonel at that time, Obasanjo, who is the present president. I got to know General Bisala and his wife very well. They gave us a very nice farewell dinner. He was a person you would want to know anywhere. He was from the northern middle belt. When I next met Obasanjo, it was a meeting that he and some others were having at the airport in Kaduna, and they were meeting in the VIP lounge. I just poked my head in there to say "Hello" to everyone and they looked shocked as if they were discussing something very, very private. Not too long after I left Nigeria, there was a coup attempt in which General Bisala was said to be involved. I remember seeing on the pages of "Time" magazine a picture of him tied up at the firing squad stake just before he was executed. I thought, "My God, I know this guy." The first person I knew in my career (I got to know others later elsewhere) for whom the stakes turned out to be so high. I thought, "What a waste of this very cultivated man, very competent man, tied up at the stake just before his execution." It made me realize the discussions we would have in the evening - when we would discuss issues, I didn't realize at the time what a personal stake he had in them. It made me reflect later in my career when I'd talk to political leaders in other countries to try to understand that aspect of their perspective on issues, that if they lose, they lose big time, they lose a lot, whereas I'm looking at it simply in terms of an analysis, in terms of U.S. interests and maybe some wider interests as well, but certainly none as fundamental as my life on the line.

Q: After elections in the United States, you don't see Americans moving to other countries.

What was the role of the British government and their expatriates?

WALKER: Commercially it was dominant in Lagos. My contact in the British embassy in Lagos was my counterpart in their political section. We would exchange views on the reintegration of the Ibos into the country. But I did that with others, too. I would not say I found the British more informed than we were on those things. I'm sure my colleagues in the embassy on the commercial and economic sides had more to do with them in terms of commercial competition. The British were dominant. There were still a lot of old connections, including with Gowan, who had gone to Sandhurst. There were certainly a lot of connections in the military, a lot of connections in the judiciary. When I was in the north, the chief justice of the high court in the north was a New Zealander. So, there were those kinds of connections. I don't have the memory of British expats in Nigeria being as standoffish from the Nigerians as my memory of the whites in South Africa being standoffish to the Africans or the British standoffish to the Afrikaaners. Somehow one got the feeling that those Brits who came out to Nigeria to stay had adapted, probably more so than those in East Africa, maybe because there were not so many of them.

Q: Was there a reflection of what was happening in French West Africa where the Americans for maybe up to today in some places are looked upon with suspicion as threatening their privileged position?

WALKER: Not politically. I'm sure Shell-BP and others had that sort of feeling in terms of oil exploration. In other commerce, I don't think they had that much competition from the United States. But sure, they would be intent on holding their own. But I know what you're referring to in Francophone Africa, the French being concerned that the Americans were edging them out. Well, that's part of the French being French. It's also a part of French-American relations in other parts of the world. It just didn't characterize our political relations with the British.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. In '73, you were off to where?

WALKER: I came back here to do a desk job, which was a good thing. Looking at my career, I had never had that sort of thing before. I had the UN desk in AFI, but that's not like having a regional country desk. So, I came back here to what was a very disappointing job for me. I was desk officer for Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was partly an ego problem of coming from being principal officer and all of the responsibilities, authority, and perks that go with that to desk officer of a country... Liberia still had some importance within the Africa Bureau in terms of some facilities that we had in Liberia, but it really was quite a- (end of tape)

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Q: Today is December 5, 2001. You came back in 1973. You were on the Liberia/Sierra Leone desk from when to when?

WALKER: From '73 to '75.Q: What was the situation in Liberia in '73?

WALKER: In the Africa Bureau, where few countries got six and seventh floor attention, at that time, Liberia was one of them, was one of our biggest embassies in Africa. We had some assets there, not world stage assets, but some of them approaching that. There was a major VOA transmission facility for Africa and parts of the Middle East. So that was an asset we wanted to protect access to. There was also am OMEGA maritime navigation station. This was before the days of global positioning systems, but this was absolutely essential for the navigation of ships at sea, particularly in the Midatlantic and South Atlantic. People used that in maritime traffic particularly and for some air traffic as well. That was an important asset. In addition to that, we had a major American commercial presence there, major in an African context, with rubber and iron ore mining. They had a long history there. Of course, Liberia has an historic association with the United States as a place where many Africans came to the U.S. as slaves and more particularly where some as part of the anti-slavery movement returned to Africa. My other country at that time, Sierra Leone, was a place where slaves from British possessions were returned to Africa.

Q: Hence the name "Freetown."

WALKER: Yes. So, there were some tangible interests for our desk officer to get his hands on. We were fairly busy, not all that busy, but busy enough for me to have a deputy on that desk, who was a very junior officer. I discovered in this first desk assignment that one of the real functions of a desk officer is training junior officers in things all the way from the substance of the issues, especially if they hadn't had field experience, of what is the relationship between the desk and the field, what services should a desk officer supply to the field? When you're in the field, you have some particular ideas about that. But also what the desk expects from the field. All the way from that sort of thing to training officers in how the foreign affairs bureaucracy works. One of the real advantages of a desk job is learning how foreign policy is made in the United States within the Department of State and the relationship between the Department of State and others who put their oars in policymaking water. In many ways, the desk officer is on the frontlines of initiating policy and particularly coordinating policy at a desk level - and training junior officers in the craft of the trade, like writing, how to write, not only the technical issues of how to set up a telegram to make sure it gets to the places you want it to go, but how to write well. I spent a good part of my time in that job, aside from getting adjusted, decompressing, to coming back from principal officer at a consulate where you ran your own show and had some independence of initiative. After that decompression and getting into the heart of the matters in Liberia and Sierra Leone... We didn't have very much to do for our Sierra Leone account. U.S. interests there were minimal. There was an American firm involved in diamonds, some in bauxite processing. But it was rather minor league stuff. There was an AID mission, a Peace Corps mission, and so that required a degree of coordination and backup. I can't remember any key substantive issues of policy that came up with regard to Sierra Leone.

In Liberia, aside from keeping a watch on those particular accounts that I mentioned earlier of the VOA station and the navigation station and the rubber plantations, the big thing - and this is true for a lot of the Third World, certainly for Africa... Our political interests at the time with the Tolbert government was simply to maintain a steady relationship with this ruling class that had governed Liberia since the days when the country was established and keep the boat steady in terms of protection of our interests there. Beyond that, our political objectives within the country were not very significant. The government of Liberia was and had always been friendly to the United States. We were the major aid donor by far, the major trade relationship. It was not only trade but financial. The dollar was the currency of Liberia. I'll never forget when I went there on one of my first field trips and someone showed me a dollar bill that someone had been carrying around in his shoe for four or five years. This must have been the most faded thing I'd ever seen. Our political agenda there was one of maintaining good relations with the government which had traditionally been friendly towards the United States and to keep that friendly relationship there for reasons of those assets that I mentioned earlier.

Q: Was there any concern about the situation in Liberia where you had the Amerigo- Liberians and then you had the people - I don't want to use the term "the people in the bush," but these are usually darker skinned people beyond this little community, from which not many benefits extended?

WALKER: It wasn't a color thing. The Amerigo-Liberians were thorough Africans. It wasn't color like in Creole country. There was a difference between Amerigo-Liberians and the Liberians who had always been indigenous to that area. But there is nothing different about that as opposed to any other country in Africa that you would visit where the ruling class had some differences from upcountry class or at least backcountry class. The ruling class could be from backcountry, but the differences between them and those who were doing well because they held office and the benefits that could come from office were quite different. They often would look on the non-governing tribes or clans not only as different, as Americo-Liberians looked at these people as different, but the feeling of difference could even be stronger in some of these other African countries because it was based on tribe and clan, whereas differences in Liberia were based on class, which is more open to upward mobility as people can acquire the accoutrements or qualities of that class B education, occupation, income, and that kind of thing.

Q: This was '73-'75. This was during the Nixon administration and moved into the Ford period, too. Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State during most of that time. Did you sense any interest from the seventh floor in where you were?

WALKER: No, and for reasons I think we all fully understood. There were some U.S. interests in Liberia which were greater than those in many or most other countries in Africa, but no one was under any illusion Liberia would claim the attention of the seventh floor in ways that some other parts of the world did.

Q: By the time you were there, was there identified a real group of Africanists within the Foreign Service? Was there considerable expertise?

WALKER: I think so, ranging from the older guys who had moved into the newly created Africa Bureau from some other bureaus - people like Fred Hadsell, who was the first guy I worked for when I came into the Foreign Service, and a number of others who had been around a number of the African countries. Plus, the Department was building up a cadre of Africanists from the '60s. Some of the people who were in graduate school with me at Boston University were there from the Department of State, sent there to gain some Africa expertise, particularly at that time when some of the complications of African society had to be taken into account in formulating policy - complications that exist in every other part of the world in terms of understanding social structure, culture, and the impact of that on political stability and on the kind of relationship that you could have with the government and people of that country.

Q: Did you feel that this was going to be your particular area by this time?

WALKER: Yes and no. One of the things you do as a younger or advancing towards middle grade officer is try to understand the bureaucratic gamesmanship of moving ahead. As a political officer in the Foreign Service, you see that people get more of a regional base from which they work to get increasingly responsible assignments and promotions. You don't get assigned as a political officer as much outside of your region as you would as a consular officer or administrative or even an economic officer, partly because political analysis requires some understanding of the social/political idiosyncracies of that region. At the same time, I had my eye on a wider world. I didn't come into the Foreign Service to be an Africanist; I came in to be a diplomat. But I understood that you had to have a launching pad, a base.Q: By '75, what were you trying to do?

WALKER: Like every other desk officer, I was trying to get a good job, a good onward assignment. You mentioned Kissinger. This was the time of Global Outlook Program [GLOP] in which Kissinger very sensibly and I think beneficially for the political officers wanted to expand the horizons and also I think his purpose was to decrease the regionalism, the parochialism, of a number of officers, by assigning the to multiple regions. It wasn't so much a problem of those of us in Africa but in places like Latin America.

Q: My understanding is that he went to a meeting of chiefs of mission in Mexico City of ARA and they seemed to be almost oblivious of what NATO was about.

WALKER: They had had all of their experience in that region. So, he very sensibly had a policy of getting people assigned to other regions as they moved in their careers. I had the benefit of that and got an assignment to the Middle East. I didn't speak Arabic. I had never been assigned there. I'm sure there were a number of officers of my grade in the Middle East Bureau who wanted this job as the head of the Political Section in Jordan, in Amman. But the GLOP policy gave me a boost in that and so I got that assignment. It was a country where you didn't really need Arabic. So, I was a contender and I got the assignment.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WALKER: From '75-'77.

Q: Before you went out to Jordan, what were you getting about the situation?

WALKER: As in any country, you go to the desk officer of that country and spend some time reading through the files, getting a sense of the history (both longer term and more recent) not only of developments in the country but the U.S.-Jordanian relationship, something of a feel for the embassy, who is doing what, who is doing what well, who is doing what not so well. Then you go to briefings around town, not only within the Department of State, but Commerce, Defense, CIA, Treasury, all of the agencies that had anything to do with the country.

Q: Did you go to the Israeli and Syrian desks?

WALKER: Oh, yes. You learn fairly quickly... I went to the Israeli desk, the Syrian desk, the Iraq desk, the Saudi desk since the Saudis financially supported in many ways Jordan, the Egyptian desk, all of that was part of getting up to speed.

Q: Did you find yourself having to watch yourself? Here you are in a nest of Arabists and you were getting a good job.

WALKER: I was concerned about that, but I found that I couldn't have been welcomed better when I got to Amman. Tom Pickering was the ambassador at that time. I hadn't known him but he and his wife were very welcoming to my wife and me and our children when we arrived. The first thing I did before my family joined me after about two or three weeks was to go out on a trip on the desert with the Pickerings. I soon learned what became part of Tom's reputation: he probably was responsible for more wear and tear on more official vehicles of embassies than any other U.S. ambassador in the world. He liked to drive himself and he liked to drive at high speed. I was welcomed by him. His DCM was a Middle East and Arabist and had spent a lot of time in that part of the world. He was professional and welcomed me in a professional way. That was Rocky Suddarth. The guy who was my deputy in the Political Section, David Winn, was a young Arabist who spoke Arabic very well and was a delightful person. We've stayed in contact and friends with all of those people ever since.Jordan was a big embassy in many ways compared to what I had known thus far in Africa. It had a major AID operation, though not as big as the one we had in Nigeria. It had a big CIA station and a big Defense attachï¿½ operation and military assistance program as well. As head of the Political Section, that was my first field experience in the problems of coordinating policy within the embassy with a number of other different sections of the embassy and with a number of other departments of the federal government represented at the embassy. I got to know this much more than I had known in Nigeria, for example, or on the desk for Liberia/Sierra leone. There is a lot of major interest in that region, the Defense Department had in Jordan - and as a political officer, you learn that you had to know what those were and to take them into account. But at the same time, the ambassador and Washington had their own perspective on things. Well, it's interesting what the role of a political section is in a place like Jordan where the relationship is between the U.S. government and the King, and all of the real diplomacy that occurs affecting important U.S. interests there occurs with the King and the King is the ambassador's contact. So, that left few other really sexy pieces for the rest of the embassy. But we found our niche in the Political Section, one in doing some independent analysis that the ambassador didn't have the time to do... I did some of that not as an Arabist, not as a Middle East specialist, but really as a political scientist and as a diplomat in assessing largely on the basis of the ambassador's reporting, from his high level contacts, and the reporting of the Defense attache's office, who also was the head of the Military Assistance Group [MAG], from the reporting of the CIA station, and looking at all of these things and bringing my own judgement to bear as a political scientist and a diplomat what all of this meant in terms of the political situation in Jordan, Jordan's relations in the region, and in terms of U.S. policy interests in Jordan. Other than that, I had one particular job with this particular ambassador, who was a prolific writer and had a memory like a sponge when he went in to meet with King Hussein and he would come back and draft cables that were 20-30 pages long, full of detail, as Pickering has a reputation of knowing minutia - the big picture as well. I ran into it not only from my experience in Jordan but I ran into it when I inspected some other posts where he was. This is the only ambassador I've ever known who knew how many bullets the Marines had in his embassy. He just knew these things, not because he was a micro and overmanager but he was just interested in all of that sort of thing and takes it in. He would come back from sessions with the King or some other senior officials and write these long telegrams, which Secretary Kissinger I understood just lapped up and loved. He liked all the detail he could get. Tom decided that what he wanted me to do was to write the cable summaries. So, I had that job. It was very good. I got to see the ambassador's first drafts, which covered a lot of detail. So, I learned an awful lot about the King, about our ambassador, and about U.S.-Jordanian relations. Having to summarize those 20 pages into two or three paragraphs made you really think about it. The ambassador was pleased and Washington was as well. In addition, my deputy, David Winn, had what we called the "underbelly of society account." He was to move in that part of Jordanian society, not only the Bedouin, but the Palestinians, at the level that nobody else looked at very much. If I had a particular beat there, it was with what we would call the head of department or sometimes the permanent secretary level with the diplomatic community and particularly with the PermSec in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We were not very much concerned in the Political Section with opposition and dissent in Jordan, firstly because we couldn't get to them. There was no formal opposition. Those who might have been some serious opposition were the kinds of people who government would not have liked embassy close contact with. That section was covered by the Agency and by the Defense attache's office and by our Political Section in our contacts at the university with students, with journalists, with academia. I developed some very good and lasting friends in Jordan, particularly in the academic world and the media world.

One of my most satisfying moments in the Foreign Service was after almost a year in Jordan, I decided to do an assessment of Jordan's relationship with Syria, particularly King Hussein and Assad at the time. I did that clearly from secondary sources. I didn't have primary sources to people at that level. But using the things I saw that the ambassador was reporting and conversations I had with him, it was sort of a search that any good journalist would do without the access to the ambassador's reports. But I wrote an assessment about Jordan's foreign policy in the Middle East and some key questions and particularly the relationship with Syria. I was quite pleased that it was very well received in the Middle East Bureau, which was not my home bureau. So, that was a satisfying thing.

Q: From what you were getting from Pickering and your reading and sometimes being the new guy on the block you have a little brighter eye than somebody who's been around and gotten used to Arab ways, what was your evaluation of the King and his abilities?

WALKER: My evaluation had to be based on the ambassador's reporting and what I heard from my own middle level contacts. The King was a survivor in the Middle East, which gave him some impressive qualities. He was wily. He always kept front and center what Jordan's interests were in any discussions he was having with other countries, including the United States. He was a man who made being a diplomat in a sense easier. He had clear identifiable interests which he pursued. He was not ideological. I didn't know very much about his personal life, but I understand it was rather "active." I didn't see any carryover of that into his political persona.

Q: How were Syria and Jordanian relations?

WALKER: They were tense. There was an attempt much before I got there of the Syrians to bump the King off when he was flying his own airplane, as he was want to do often. In the northern part of Jordan, a Syrian air force plane tried to shoot him down. It was very tense. One of the things my assessment of Jordan-Syria relations looked into is what were Jordan's and Hussein's interests in dealing with the Syrians at the time? It was a tense relationship with Syria. One of the reasons we had such good access with the King was that we were a strong trump card in the King's hand in dealing with Syria. The military assistance, weaponry, and training that we gave to his forces were a strong dissuasion to the Syrians regarding actions against Jordan. One of the most interesting things to me in Jordan, later on in my career, particularly regarding South Africa, was looking at the Jordan-Israeli relationship. That was part of our portfolio as well. I got over to Israel and the West Bank a couple of times and had a chance through our consul general, Mike Newlin, to meet some Israelis. It was very interesting to compare the discussions I had with them with the discussions I would have with Palestinians in Jordan. One quickly got the impression in sitting up all night over dinner or drinks with Palestinians and with the Israelis (separately) - in Jordan with the Palestinians and with the Israelis in Israel - that you could talk about the Arab-Israeli issue, and that's all anyone talked about, into the wee hours of the morning and get a brilliant insight on how to resolve an issue and deal with it and put it on the table, and all of them had thought of it years ago. They had gone through so systematically all permutations and combinations of the possible there that there wasn't that much new. I will come to my South Africa experience later on, but I was struck by how that was the same there.

Q: What seemed to be the inhibitor from using these brilliant ideas to solve the situation?

WALKER: I see it more in hindsight than I saw it at that time, but the main inhibitor was that no one was really ready for a settlement. Not all of the pieces on the chess board found their natural place. Both sides thought that they could get more, and both had an exaggerated notion of their positions of strength. That was a time when Israel wouldn't sit down and talk with the PLO, would not have any notion that the PLO could represent the Palestinians in negotiations and be part of the negotiation process, and certainly there was no Israeli notion of a Palestinian state. It was far away from there. At the same time, there were, as there are in my view today, models of a settlement that people just seemed wedded to and stuck in. They couldn't break out of that and think beyond the box, beyond those models of a settlement, models which were valid at the time because the good ones were based on the power realities and political realities and some of those have shifted. The new models have come out of that. But there is still always a set package when you talk about Arab-Israeli or Palestinian-Israeli things. Very seldom do you find people breaking out of the box and trying to think creatively.

There is another aspect of my time in Jordan that I remember particularly. That's the first time that I really was concerned about my own security. This was the time of George Habash and some of the others who were targeting Americans. So, we had to be careful where we went in our time outside of the embassy. There was one occasion when Tom Pickering was up at the palace talking to the King. The consular officer came up to my office and he said, "I'm thinking of leaving the Foreign Service. It's dull. Nothing ever happens here." At that very moment, machinegun fire broke out from the hotel across the street. This was an attempt of some Palestinian extremist groups to take over. Very quickly, the Jordanian security services came in and fired back. I remember how brave I thought some of those people were, getting up on the roof and throwing hand grenades down the chimney where some insurgents were and then jumping into it. But that was rather frightening. I called my wife. She was teaching at the American school with the children. They were all hunkered down there. It didn't go much further than that. But you did have to be concerned when you went walking into town on the weekends or camping out - we had a Volkswagen camper at the time - in the desert. The security issue was always in the back of your mind.

Q: What was the situation with Jordan and the West Bank at that time? Did the King still claim sovereignty over the West Bank? At a certain point, he renounced sovereignty.

WALKER: One of his sources of support and income from the Saudis and others was that he was the temporary guardian, in theory, of the holy places in Jerusalem and of the West Bank. The Israelis wanted to push for a long time the notion of Jordan's resuming responsibilities on the West Bank. The King was of two minds on that. On the one hand, it would certainly have increased his importance, but it would have infuriated many Palestinians.

Q: Did we have much of a reading of the Palestinians?

WALKER: The Palestinians in Jordan, I think so. Certainly the Agency did. I think the Political Section did. My deputy, David Winn, deserves a great deal of credit in that in moving well in the Palestinian community. Some of my contacts there - tennis contacts, for example - were Palestinians who were high in the legal profession, in the academic profession, and in journalism - were quite open and a delight to be with. This is the Palestinian elite. We did not have good information about Palestinian opinion in the refugee camps. That was not only dangerous to go into, but the government didn't want us going in there. So, what was brewing in there aside from what we knew from more controlled information, I don't think we had a very good grasp on that.

Q: This was a period where we were not talking to the PLO.

WALKER: That's right.

Q: Did Arafat make appearances in Jordan?

WALKER: No, not only were we not talking to the PLO but the Jordanians weren't talking to the PLO. Arafat was among those who tried to overthrow King Hussein and they had a bloody battle.

Q: Were you aware of Israeli contacts in Jordan?

WALKER: One was aware of the King's non-public contact with senior people in Israel, particularly down at Aqaba, where he had a residence and used to go to water ski. It was an open secret that the King would sometimes meet with Israelis at his villa in Aqaba. That was a delightful thing. We would go down and camp on the beach in Aqaba, and we would see the King out there water skiing. There was much more contact by people at my level and below with him 10-15 years before I got there. He was a young guy who liked to hang out with the expats, go cart racing, that kind of thing. But he had pulled back from that by the time I got there.

Q: Was there an attitude in the embassy among the junior/senior officers towards Israel, maybe taking sides to a certain extent?

WALKER: I expected to go to my first Middle East post with a bunch of Arabists and find it full of "localities", people who are more Arab than the Arabs. There is criticism in some circles of our Middle East Bureau that it is full opeople who get wedded to the Arab point of view, the same way there is criticism of localitis in all regional bureaus, particularly by people who have studied a hard language and got to know. But I didn't find that. That said, there was a closer identity of people at our embassy with Jordanians than there might be in some other countries in the Middle East not only because of the good bilateral relationships we had with Jordan but because the Jordanians who the embassy came in contact with, both the Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan, were just so modern, westernized people. They liked the sort of things we did. They invited you to their houses for dinner. Wine would be served with dinner, cocktails. The wives would be there. It was quite a comfortable setting. But for all that, I didn't sense certainly on the part of the embassy front office, the ambassador and the DCM, nor on the part of the Political Section and my colleague who was an Arabist, any localitis, nor did I do so in the other sections either. That is not say that our diplomats did not see justice in many of the Palestinian complaints of Israeli actions, and that they did not believe a settlement required greater flexibility on both sides. Some pro-Israeli critics mistake that for anti-Israeli sentiments.

Q: Did we have any feel or was it not important about Islamic religious leaders?

WALKER: I don't have any recollection of even the term "Islamic fundamentalism." The hard line Palestinian "rejectionists" were secular. I don't have any recollection in our Political beat in the political Section of looking out for and trying to learn more about political mullahs, that kind of thing. There were people among our contacts who were very concerned, Jordanians and Palestinians, about some Islamic issues, particularly the protection of the holy places in Jerusalem. But these people were more scholars than religious people. I don't recall religious fanaticism there at all. When I spoke of security, that was never a part of it. The security threats were the Palestinian extremist groups for secular political reasons.

Q: George Habash and others, who had nothing to do with religion.

WALKER: These were Palestinian nationalists.

Q: What was the reading that you were getting on the Jordanian army? Was it an effective force? Was it loyal?

WALKER: We got a very good reading on the Jordanian army with the ambassador's with the King, with the station's contacts, and with the Defense attache's contacts.

The Defense attachï¿½ was doublehatted. He was both the Defense attachï¿½ and the head of the Military Assistance Group, the group that gave military assistance. He not only could get an understanding and information wearing his attache's hat, but his MAP hat gave him had something to give in return, which increased the flow of information to him. I think our understanding of the Jordanian military is that compared to a number of Arab armies, it was quite good, particularly the air force. One, it had good weaponry from us. A lot of the diplomacy at that time was what kind of weaponry would it get? But that was an effective force vis a vis Syria, for example, but not so effective to be a real military threat to Israel. The other aspect of the Jordanian military was not external but internal. Any leadership of Jordan beginning with the King had to have the strong support of the army, which was Bedouin led and not Palestinian, whereas the Palestinian refugees were dominant in commerce and many of the professions (legal, academic, medicine, and so on). They were not allowed into the controlling positions in the armed forces. That stayed solidly Bedouin. The Bedouin looked to the political leadership, beginning with the King, to be concerned primarily about the interests of the people east of the Jordan River, mainly themselves, and not to jeopardize these interests by being too concerned about the interests of the Palestinians.

Q: How did things look on the West Bank at the time? We had our consulate in Jerusalem. Did you keep a running brief on what was happening?

WALKER: No, we didn't from Amman on the West Bank. I would go over there as Political Counselor from time to time just to coordinate with the reporting coming not only from the embassy in Tel Aviv but from the consulate general in Jerusalem. Through our Political Section contacts with Palestinians living in Jordan who certainly kept their contacts with relatives and others on the West Bank, we could follow it, but it was reporting that was filtered through the eyes of Palestinians there. Much broader and more accurate reporting was coming from the Consulate General in Jerusalem.

Q: You left there in '77. Were there any major problems during the time you were there outside of attempted coups?

WALKER: No, not in U.S.-Jordanian relations. It was a pretty steady time for me. I got a chance to learn something about a new part of the world. One of the things I saw in Jordan which is an aspect of diplomatic life is, we had more senior Washington visitors than we had at any of my other posts, beginning with Henry Kissinger and later Cyrus Vance when the administrations changed, but also congressional delegations. You referred to Congressman Solarz earlier. He was visiting Jordan when I first met him. We had a number of senior officials from the State Department coming out and a lot of congressional delegations as well. That was my first real experience of being a control officer for big delegations. I was that for Kissinger, for Vance later, and for congressional delegations. I might say a few words about this. This is an important part of the work of diplomats abroad.

It's a false notion to think that diplomats don't like to have senior visitors come out. Some people put that out as it takes up their time with people who are not all that serious and interesting. But diplomats are interested in not only getting the country to which they are assigned and their portfolios on the map so that people read what they write and pay attention to it, but handling visiting VIPs is also good for one's career. Let me tell you about a couple of VIP visitors which are symbolic in a number of issues and problems.

Kissinger came out on two occasions when I was there. The first one for which I was control officer, I met the plane with the ambassador. The ambassador greeted the Secretary as he came out and I greeted the other people with him who were handling his trip. One was Joe Sisco, who at the time was Assistant Secretary for the Middle East. Sisco was incensed because the King wasn't there to receive the Secretary. I said, "Mr. Assistant Secretary, this isn't a state visit. This is a foreign minister coming." He had this inflated notion of who this particular secretary was. We got over that. Then the Secretary was being put up in the residence of the Crown Prince, the King's brother, who was number two. I saw what happen, the sort of arrogance of this visiting delegation. They went into this man's house, the security people, and started cutting up carpets and nailing things in walls for cables and the rest. I said, "What are you doing? You are a guest in the Crown Prince's house." I was told that their primary concern was the security of the Secretary. They left us a lot of feathers to smooth when they left. The difference in personalities and the difference in egos was as night and day with the visit of Secretary Vance. I was control officer some months later when Secretary Cyrus Vance came and it couldn't have been a bigger difference. One of the first things he did was say, "Provide some time in my schedule for me to meet the families of the embassy people." He took time away from a very busy schedule and met with the wives and children. That was so appreciated. He was not demanding at all.

Another anecdote. We had a visit by Senator Javits, for whom I was control officer.

Q: He was a senator from New York.

WALKER: Yes, and also an important player on the Foreign Relations Committee. He in his own travel schedule wanted to come on Friday, which is the Sabbath or the Holy day of the week there. We said, "It's going to be very difficult to arrange any visits with you." But we were able to get the foreign minister to receive Senator Javits in his home on Friday, which was a big gesture. I took this congressional visitor over there and we knocked on the door and the foreign minister welcomed him personally at the door. As we went in, Senator Javits' first words to the foreign minister, who had gone out of his way to welcome him, as the foreign minister asked if he would like a drink, and the Senator asked, "Is it safe to drink the water?" He was in this man's house. Foreign Minister Rifat, who was a very cosmopolitan, urbane man, sort of looked at me and we both smiled and went on.

Another big congressional delegation came in. A few of them were serious about having meetings, but for some of them this was a junket. We had to spend a lot of time with a senator from Virginia helping him search in the market of Amman for a cuckoo clock. You don't go to the Middle East for cuckoo clocks. But you learn some things from these visits. You learn that a lot of this is very lighthearted stuff. But you meet other people like Solarz, who worked harder than anyone I've ever known when he came to visit, which meant that we had to work harder as well. You welcome these visits because they can be helpful to your own agenda in that country but also because you can build up contacts with people who can be helpful to you back at home both in support of their policy recommendations and not incidentally of your own career progression.

Let me make another point because it's instructive of the business of diplomacy and diplomats. I ran across this time and again in subsequent assignments. That is the role of diplomats at an embassy, other than the ambassador, in countries like Jordan and many to which I have been assigned where the important, real decisions on foreign policy are made almost totally at the top. So, the other points of influence that you normally would expect in a government and you would want to touch to have influence on foreign policy matters are not connected. Foreign diplomats assigned to Washington have a wide arena of points of influence on policy, not only in our government, partly because our federal government is so decentralized and so many different departments of government have an oar in foreign policy matters, and the role of Congress and Congress itself is decentralized and our civil society is so large and decentralized itself that first and second secretaries of embassies in Washington have a lot to do. There is a lot of ground to cover. But in some of these other countries - Jordan is one of them - power is not decentralized. So, even though I had contacts in the foreign ministry up to the person directly under the foreign minister, who was the ambassador's contact, that was heavy stuff in another kind of country. But when I went to see the permanent secretary in the foreign ministry and the other ministries or heads of department, I would make my pitch, my argument, sometimes under instructions and sometimes freewheeling in an exploratory way myself, but I knew that they had marginal impact on the final making of policy in Jordan, which was made in the royal palace by the King. You never knew to what extent senior officials of government were taken into account or even taken into the discussion, had a seat at the table at the royal palace. So, even though I met with the number two person in the foreign ministry and should expect to have influence in that way, my best contact was a relatively low grade captain in the armed forces who was assigned to the royal palace because he married one of the King's daughters. He and I would play tennis. I learned more from him and I think the things that I said to him in terms of trying to project the American position or interest in things probably got closer to the decisionmaking channel than through my more formal demarches to the number two guy in the foreign ministry. That's a kind of conduct of diplomacy that you have to get used to and learn how to play.

Q: Was there enough room to play for people in other parts of the embassy who dealt with policy? If they were cut off from the real top level people, did they have to find room in which to exercise their abilities?

WALKER: The people who had contacts where it counts in Jordan - and this is so in other countries of a small leadership group - were the ambassador, the Defense attachï¿½ (who also was a military assistance person), the chief of station of the Agency since the Agency had big programs in Jordan, not so much AID in Jordan because although we had an aid program there, it wasn't all that key as in some other places... We got to know some people there in the development of the Jordan Valley and Jordan River program but, no, except at those very top levels, the rest of our contacts were marginal, but nonetheless giving color and shadings to our. You were always thinking of the future of the next generation. We were cultivating those people. That always helps. One of my contacts was a guy who a couple of years after I left became foreign minister. That's the kind of person you want to create close contacts with. So, that paid off in a longer sense.

Q: Were there any water issues that came up while you were there?

WALKER: Oh, yes, for example, the Yarmuk River up in the north. In my classes that I teach today in international relations and another in diplomacy, and the lecturing I do in foreign affairs, we get to the issues of the 21st century when you move beyond some of the typical geostrategic/geopolitical issues, one of them is water in many parts of the world. As Israeli leader Rabin said, "If we settle all the problems of the Middle East and don't settle this problem of water, the region is going to explode." Yes, there were issues of the Yarmuk River and the aquifers along the Jordan River which were issues we knew were down the pike in settlement negotiations between not only the Palestinians in Israel but Jordan and Syria and Israel. So, some of our aid programs were directed towards improving the management of water resources on the Jordan side of the Jordan River and the Yarmuk River. That aspect of our aid program was useful as a diplomatic tool in that way. I know the ambassador got very much involved in that program. I went with him on a couple of trips on that.

Q: Were you hit heavily on longstanding support of Israel by your Jordanian contacts? Was this a source of constant discussion?

WALKER: Yes and no. Permeating all of the discussions - and they would bring it up from time to time - were their views that Americans are unbalanced and biased against them on this issue. But our contacts among the Jordanians, the Palestinians as well as the Jordanians, were a very sophisticated lot. Many of them had studied in the United States, knew the U.S. or read U.S. newspapers. They knew the politics of this issue. They knew that domestic politics plays an important role in the foreign policy of any country. They understood that. But they also understood the importance of having some feedback into Washington of their point of view. So, they continued to talk to us in that way. But never was there in any of the contacts I had any sense of bitterness that one senses we get these days. One of my major contacts was a very successful Palestinian attorney and a good tennis partner of mine. He lost a lot in the expansion of Israel. His family was of great social and economic position in Haifa. Their house is still back there. Their property is still back there. They suffered and would like to go back one day. He had every reason to be bitter but wasn't bitter. I remember when my parents visited me there, he invited them to dinner at his house. Very hospitable. We continued friendly correspondence after I left Jordan.

Q: In '77, you were off again. Whither?WALKER: When my tour was coming to an end, a number of things happened that would affect the future direction of my career. One, I got a call from Don Easum, who at the time was our ambassador to Nigeria, who wanted me to come as his political counselor. I didn't think that was a very good move. I had had a lot of Nigeria time. I had been political officer in Lagos. I had been principal officer in Kaduna. Before I went to Jordan, I had Nigeria added to my portfolio as desk officer. So, I had a lot of Nigeria. That was a stage in my career when it took a long time to get promoted. I had some senior friends in the Service and had them look at my file. They said, "You've got too much Nigeria in here." So, that disinclined me to Don Easum. I know Don and I would have worked very well together. There were some interesting things to report in Nigeria. But I declined that. Then, lo and behold, the guy who was going to Bogota, Colombia as Jimmy Carter's ambassador called me and wanted me to go as his DCM. I said, "What are you talking about? I had my GLOP and my out of area assignment. I don't know Spanish. But I do know that the South America Bureau. They'll eat me alive down there if I go as DCM to one of their choice positions." Well, there is a story to that. The guy who was going as ambassador was a personal friend, a neighbor, in fact, not a career person, who at that time had already gone to Yale as General Counsel. He had Puerto Rican. He was Puerto Rico's representative here in Washington. Jimmy Carter was going to nominate him to be ambassador to Bogota. He sensibly wanted his number two to be someone in whom he could have great confidence. He knew nothing about the Foreign Service. He knew nothing about diplomacy. But he was wise enough to know that he needed someone who was going to be his deputy to be not only a good pro but someone in whom he could have full confidence to protect him and his own interests. So, what to do? It looked like a good assignment. It was a good embassy. I would get a chance to pick up another language. It was another part of the world. Although I had my apprehension about the wolves waiting in the South America Bureau coming in to take one of their plums, I said, "Alright, I'll do it."

I was also asked at that time if I wanted to go as political counselor in South Africa. I said, "That would be a really interesting assignment, even more than political counselor in Nigeria." I was rather well disposed towards that when this call came to be DCM in Bogota.

So, I said, "Alright," and my family and I packed out of Jordan and came back to study Spanish at FSI. A little personal vignette of life abroad. In packing out, we had to leave our little daschund, which we had gotten in northern Nigeria, behind until we got settled here. While we were away, he was dognapped. And the embassy sent us this really somber cable that our dog had been dognapped and they didn't know where she was. Well, what had happened was that she was tied up by the people who had dognapped her. Our dog had just had puppies. She chewed through that rope and found her way back, a hero, the first escaped American hostage to come back in the Middle East. The dog finally was shipped to us back here.

My wife and I were at FSI studying Spanish when the rug was pulled from under us. My friend did not get agreement for Bogota. Why? As I was told, those Colombians didn't want a Puerto Rican coming down as ambassador - those "Castillian Spaniards." People tried to get them to understand, "Look, this guy is close to Jimmy Carter. His children and the President's daughter, Amy, used to play together and sleep over and so on." But anyhow, once he heard this, he said, "The hell with it. I don't need this. I'm not going to go down there." That left me hanging in the wind. What to do? I had started Spanish but hadn't learned enough of it. What was I going to do? No other place in Latin America would want someone with no experience and no good Spanish language ability. Dick Moose, who at that time was Under Secretary of Management, was a friend of the guy who asked me to go to Bogota as DCM. He called Dick and Dick said to come in to see him. He said, "One of the things I'm trying to do is to strengthen our DCM assignment process. We'll find something good for you." Meanwhile, I don't know if it was because of the stress of this big change, I was living at the time in a house in Friendship Heights owned by the son or grandson of the guy who built the Panama Canal, the engineer. But there I got pleurisy and went into the hospital. It was a painful thing. There, I was told that Dick Moose would like me to go as DCM to Tanzania. I ran that past my wife. None of us knew anything about Tanzania, but the notion of going from cosmopolitan Bogota to Dar Es Salaam was devastating. Meanwhile, I was in the hospital with pleurisy, leaning over in pain, when our ambassador to Tanzania, James Spain, was back in Washington accompanying Tanzanian president Nyerere on a state visit to the United States and he wanted to interview me for the job. He came by the hospital. There I was in my nightgown sitting bent over in pain as we talked. He got on a plane on his way back and made up his mind in Dar Es Salaam and decided I would be his DCM. So, my assignment was changed to Dar Es Salaam and we went out as DCM in Dar Es Salaam.

Q: You were in Tanzania from when to when?

WALKER: 1977-1979.

Q: What was Tanzania like when you arrived?

WALKER: Poor, hot, and like Jordan, not much for anyone to do other than the ambassador, even less for our political officer and our economic officer than in Jordan. In Jordan as political counselor, we had a portfolio of responsibilities and contacts, who though not at a center of power, nonetheless had some say in decisions but who also were themselves urbane, cosmopolitan people who welcomed contact with the diplomatic community and there was some interesting back and forth and to and fro - and the issues, even though the big ones were taken up by the ambassador, were nonetheless important back in Washington. In Tanzania, you had the same situation where only the president made the decisions. He was the ambassador's contact. The other things left around were not very important at all. But even worse, Tanzanians were not very accessible. They were people who themselves were not only afraid for political reasons to have that much to do with the diplomatic community, but who personally were not that inclined to associate with foreigners. It was the first country I had been in where senior officials had to get permission to accept the invitations of diplomats. Their ministers decided who would be the token representative at a dinner you might have. I never had that in any other place. Moreover, Tanzanians themselves, the urbane, cosmopolitan sector of society, is very small. It's a very poor country. But I found the Tanzanians not to be outgoing and friendly. The Nigerians, the Yoruba in particular, are like a nation of used car salesmen - they're outgoing, gregarious, and very sociable. Even the Hausa Fulani up north, though more reserved, are nonetheless outgoing. I found the people of Tanzania to be very withdrawn. It was not only us from western countries, but my diplomatic colleagues from Africa and other places told me the same thing. I don't know the reason for that. Maybe so many people have walked through their country in a brutal way that it makes them distrustful. So, how did I find Tanzania? I found it very poor, very hot, without that much diplomatic business to do when I got there, but beautiful, lovely game parks - the Sarengetti and whatnot, interesting that way. I as DCM had more to do in managing the place, managing the other officers' product. Jim Spain, like Tom Pickering, did a lot of writing and he wrote very well. I improved my writing ability there, I think. I didn't have the job I had as political officer in Jordan of boiling down the ambassador's writing in summary paragraphs. Nonetheless, whenever Jim met with Nyerere and wrote up his cable, he would always call me over, which generally happened to be 10:00 or 11:00 PMI; and we would go over it to see what needed to be changed before it was dispatched. But the major work I had there was to manage the embassy, except when I was Charge, when the ambassador was away. The ambassador happened to be away during some important periods shortly after the war broke out between Nyerere's Tanzania and Idi Amin's Uganda. Amin had made the mistake of sending his armed forces into a border dispute area of Tanzania, and Nyerere decided to react not only because his small territory was threatened, but in his view, Idi Amin was an embarrassment to Africa and a real ogre. He decided to fight. The United States had its own reasons for supporting Nyerere on this, partly because of the character of Idi Amin himself, but also because of very strong support given to Amin by Qadhafi from Libya. This Uganda-Tanzania dispute had several facets to it. One, the president crossing border to take territory. Two, the human rights dimension of somebody standing up to this evil man, Idi Amin. And three, stymying or countering the efforts of Qadhafi to extend his influence elsewhere in Africa. Qadhafi began to give more and more military support to Amin to conduct his war with Tanzania. This had some direct effect on us. We knew from intelligence sources that Qadhafi had sent down through Khartoum a high flying Soviet bomber aircraft. I had to go in and explain to the Tanzanian foreign minister and then to Nyerere when I was charge what the capabilities of this aircraft were, the altitude it could fly, and that it might lob a few bombs on Tanzania. We were worried because the plane might fly that high, but the technical capabilities of the pilot or bombardier in that plane to be able to hit the port area if they wanted were not all that accurate. Our embassy and our residences were quite near. It frightened the Tanzanians. They said, "We have nothing that we can do to protect ourselves." Then we learned through our own sources that the Libyans were shipping some major armaments including tanks to Idi Amin to fight the Tanzanians. We were tracking the movement of these weapons, particularly the tanks. They would come in through the port of Mombasa and go up to Uganda through Kenya. The people who had the big role to play here was our embassy in Nairobi trying to persuade the Kenyans not to allow this to happen. But our role in Tanzania was keeping the Tanzanians informed so that Nyerere himself could carry this message to Arap-Moi in Kenya. So, I had a lot to do with Nyerere during this period of Charge-ship, particularly over the conduct of this war. I must say that this was my first chance to see close at hand the diplomatic tool that a CIA station can be simply in providing good information, not operations - we didn't have operations. But in terms of the information they were able to get, the conduct of the war, the order of battle, which was not available to the Tanzanians, gave me a very good diplomatic tool in my discussions with the Tanzanians. I was very impressed with the quality of the station chief and his understanding of what the diplomatic needs were and of the primacy of the ambassador and the Charge in communicating this information. This gave me good entre as Charge with Nyerere, not only on this war matter but on other matters on our agenda. One of the things we were trying to do was to get the Peace Corps back into Tanzania.

Let me backtrack a bit. Let me talk about going up to Butiama, Nyerere's upcountry however retreat. He on a couple of occasions summoned me up there to discuss the Uganda battlefront, the war. I would fly up with his personal assistant, Joan Wickam, a Fabian Brit whom he had had known in his Fabian days and had kept on as his personal assistant. We would fly out in this two, sometimes one, engine plane buzzing the cattle herders and whatnot. We landed in Butiama. I'll never forget my first time. Nyerere would go up there for a couple of weeks every year and work not only on his own farm but in what amounted to the commune fields. It was fascinating to go up and see this head of state in his Wellington high boots in the mud out there weeding the communal gardens like everyone else in the village. He was a remarkable man in personal qualities. His failed socialism helped to impoverish that country. But his personal character was just very impressive. I had a number of sessions with him as Charge on the porch of his home in Dar Es Salaam. What an articulate, intelligent man he was. I think Kissinger said that he was one of the most articulate men that he had ever had discussions with. But I wanted to bring in that dimension of the quality of people you deal with. Nyerere was a very impressive man not only in terms of his articulate speech but his incisive mind that went astray on economic matters, but also on diplomatic and larger matters he was quite articulate.

Q: How did the war come out?

WALKER: The war came out with Tanzania being victorious. Idi Amin later left, was overthrown, and went on to Saudi Arabia. One of my last jobs I had to do there as Charge some corn that was to be shipped from Kenya down south of Tanzania, maybe to Zambia. I've forgotten the reason why we wanted that shipment of corn to go and Nyerere didn't, or at least not without support duty for transit. It was payback time, and I was told to go to Nyerere and get him to facilitate the shipment of the corn. This was something that was not high on his agenda at the time. I met with him and his foreign minister and we got that payback. A big part of our diplomacy had to do with Rhodesia or now Zimbabwe. But the question was, how do you get the white government of Rhodesia which had unilaterally declared its independence from Britain and a system which maintained white rule there, how do you negotiate a change? We were very much involved with that, the United States, within the contact group of other powers - the Brits, the Germans, and French Canadians. So, that was a very active diplomacy, but again it was a diplomacy of the chief of mission or the acting chief of mission. Jim Spain was very involved in that, and I as Charge. We got a lot of visitors during that time from Washington with the contact group. There was a frontline group of countries, those that were closest to Rhodesia, African countries: Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, and Botswana.

So, there was very active diplomacy through the contact group and some bilateral with Nyerere on this Rhodesia issue because Nyerere was the elder statesman among these African countries. So, if we could influence Nyerere, the notion would be that he could influence the frontline African states on the diplomacy of Rhodesia. So, that was very active not only in the embassy's diplomacy but in visiting delegations of Dick Moose, the Assistant Secretary for Africa, Andy Young, who was our UN representative. Andy Young and David Owen from Britain carried a lot of the load in that. Don McHenry came out sometimes in Andy's absence. Incidentally, it was these frequent visits of Andy Young where Andy got to know Jim Spain very well that led to Andy's inviting Jim to be his deputy at our UN mission in New York. Jim turned out to have the same experience I had in Colombia. Jim decamped, left Tanzania, to go and be the deputy U.S. representative to the UN. As he was en route after I had given him his farewell dinner, Andy Young got fired by Jimmy Carter from the job for meeting with the PLO. So Jim was left high and dry.

There is another aspect of this Rhodesia diplomacy that I want to mention, because it's instructive of the way diplomacy is conducted. Particularly that aspect of the conduct of diplomacy connecting the relationship between embassies and their foreign ministries or for us the Department of State. The aspect of it is this: the dialogue or the consultations that occurred between the Department of State and the embassies in the field, of the contact group embassies, was impressive. I attribute all of that to the Assistant Secretary for Africa, Dick Moose, who just took a consultative role. He wanted to bring the field into the making of policy. It was fascinating for me to see this exchange of telegrams, some of which I participated in, American ambassadors and these contact group countries with Dick Moose and amongst themselves on designing the diplomacy. I later learned that that isn't the approach of all assistant secretaries. But this consultative one, this collegial one, on the part of Moose with the ambassadors in the field, was a marvelous thing to watch. It was creative, innovative. The ideas that came out represented a model of creative and collegial diplomacy.

Q: You've talked about Nyerere. One of the things that strikes me in observing is that Nyerere was really the darling of the socialist world, particularly Scandinavia, the socialist parties of Germany and France, and the Labour Party. But he had been almost poisoned by this damned Fabian stuff. Something happened. He was such a disaster. How did we read that?

WALKER: You're absolutely right: it was a disaster. He was the darling of the European socialists, particularly the Swedes. They had an enormous aid program there, bigger than ours, their biggest in the world. They were romanticized by this notion of ujamaa in Tanzania, of a community approach to things. How did we read it? We read it as the failure not just primarily of Nyerere but the failure of that socialist approach to economic growth. When you take away the incentive of the entrepreneur and the initiative and the hard work, it's a misreading of the nature of Man, of what motivates people. We saw the failure of plantations that were communalized that nosedived, of agricultural production going down. Alright, there were some other attractive things about it. The high percentage of the budget that went to education, the quality of the public library in Dar Es Salaam, the fact that the library could import books without import duty, all of those were good ideas. But the economic failure of it... I must say this: the person who pushed this analysis was the embassy's economic officer. It was not always a very popular analysis even at that stage in places like the Africa Bureau.

Q: Nyerere was considered a stellar player.

WALKER: He was one of the original African nationalist leaders, so he had that kind of patina to him. But he also was a terribly brilliant and articulate man except on economic policy. So, he was admired by a number of people. But still at that stage in the mid-'70s, the capitalist notion of the University of Chicago School of Economics had not caught on in the United States and certainly not in places like the Africa Bureau. This kind of analysis that our economic officer was pushing was not a popular one, but he was right on target and one that was generally agreed upon in the embassy - and that is that with Nyerere's socialist policies there is not much future of an aid program there except for meeting basic human needs of the humanitarian kind. It's not going to be very useful in terms of moving economic growth until some policy changes occur. This was before the international financial institutions - World Bank, the IMF, and others - and bilateral aid programs, before they were insisting on structural reform and changes of economic policy to unleash the energies of the private sector. So, for those of us who were looking at these issues, the admiration for Nyerere as the political man was limited by a growing appreciation that his inability to let go of his fascination with Fabian socialism in the early days of his life brought such unfortunate consequences to his country.

Q: You say you went up in a plane with Joan Luken. Was she the eminence grise or something like that?

WALKER: No, I don't think so. She didn't have that kind of power ambitious personality. She was someone who had been Nyerere's assistant since his Fabian socialist days when he was studying education to become a teacher and was studying in England. She was around, but she didn't push it. She was quite willing just to be someone with whom he could talk. Also, she set in on these meetings to take very careful notes and sum them up. Maybe he didn't trust other people to do it. But I wouldn't call her an eminence grise. In fact, no non-Tanzanian had that position.

Q: Were you looking around for opposition to Nyerere or was there any?

WALKER: No. This was a country where I didn't have the desk officer in the Africa Bureau and the Bureau of Human Rights breathing down my neck about human rights violations. There was not a high place on our goals and objectives in Tanzania to bring democracy to that country. We sought out, especially through USIA's activities with students and cultural activities, we tried to broaden our contacts among people who were not in the government. But that wasn't that successful for all of the reasons I mentioned in the beginning. One, you're dealing with a dictatorial government. You're dealing with a closed society. You're dealing with a country without a very well developed civil society. And you're dealing with a culture that's not very open to foreigners.

Q: You mentioned that the Peace Corps wasn't there. Had there ever been a Peace Corps there?

WALKER: Let me make a note here and go back and check some facts on that.

Q: Was the Peace Corps on our agenda? We were trying to put a Peace Corps in there?

WALKER: I want to check that. I hope I'm not confusing this with where reinstating the Peace Corps was highly controlled on my agenda.

Q: How did you feel by the time you left? Whither Tanzania?

WALKER: When I left, I knew I was going to South Africa. I had received this call from Dick Moose, who asked if I would go to South Africa as DCM. We had been out for a while. Since I knew in 1975, we had been to Jordan and Tanzania. Our children were back in boarding school in Massachusetts at the time. The question was, should we go back and be with them and ask for a home assignment? We called them and they said, "Please go to South Africa. That gets us a chance to travel at holidays and to stay at this school." So, I got this call from Dick Moose and he very sensibly and very considerately said, "To help you decide, why don't you go down and have a look at South Africa?" Bill Edmondson, who was the ambassador at the time, had accepted Moose's recommendation that I become DCM... I flew down there and spent a couple of nights with Bill looking around, came back, talked it over with my wife, and decided to go there. So, when we left, we were going with good feelings. It was an excellent onward assignment to be DCM at a much larger embassy and an embassy where the issues were more front burner issues back in Washington and where the standard of living would be better. Tanzania was very poor. We had to hope that someone was coming down from Kenya with butter, flour, sugar, and that kind of thing. So, I left upbeat in terms of this new assignment. The feeling was good, as I was promoted on the eve of my departure from Tanzania. It was a promotion that I needed for that job as DCM. So, I was going with a good feeling. When I left Tanzania, we were on a cooperative track. We had been cooperating on negotiating Rhodesia majority rule and our bilateral relationship was particularly strengthened by our cooperation with the Tanzanians in Nyerere's war against Idi Amin. So that was all on track. That was going well. The cooperation on Rhodesia was going well. But economically, I didn't see any hint of any changes in Tanzania's socialist policy that would offer a chance for economic growth. It came much later, when the guy who was Nyerere's foreign minister, Ben, became president and has launched very much of an economic reform program.

Q: Did you see within the society of Tanzania an entrepreneurial streak?

WALKER: I didn't see that as you see it in West Africa, particularly among the Yoruba or the Ibo. I didn't get to know... You met some Tanzanian businesspeople, a lot of Indians in the private sector. I can't think of an African Tanzanian who I knew as an entrepreneur, a businessperson, the way I knew many in West Africa.

Q: What about Zanzibar?

WALKER: We had a consulate on Zanzibar. I did visit there a couple of times. Zanzibar didn't register heavily on our screen. Tanzania had a big problem in Zanzibar. When Zanzibar wanted to be an independent country, there was a revolt there against the Arab ruling class. Nyerere decided he could best contain that by bringing them within Tanganyika and calling it "Tanzania," Tanganyika and Zanzibar. But it was always a rather uneasy relationship. Zanzibar, even though the coup was against the ruler of the former Arab slavers, it still was ruled by people who we would call Matise in a way. They were a Swahili mixture of African and Arab people. And they didn't feel a sense of ethnic or certainly not tribal identification with the mainlanders, and the other way around. So, Nyerere knew he would always have a difficult time with Zanzibar. He was very good at coopting many of their leaders into senior positions in government as a way of consolidating the merger. Ellen Shippey was our consul in Zanzibar. I went over to visit several times. Her job was to keep a hand on the pulse, which meant not only high level contacts but other social contacts and reading the local press and seeing what's going on. But Zanzibar's internal politics was not all of important interest to us. Zanzibar played no role on the central diplomatic issues we had with Tanzania, which were Rhodesia, Namibia, and Nyerere's general OAU influence.

Q: You haven't mentioned the Soviet Union. Was anything happening there?

WALKER: No. Of greater interests to us in Tanzania were the Chinese, who had an embassy there and who had been active on the Rhodesia issue, both in building the Tanzania-Zambia railroad to lessen Zambia's dependence on white-minority ruled Rhodesia, and in training Rhodesia guerillas. It was a time when things were beginning to mellow in the bilateral relationship of the United States and China. I remember the Chinese embassy inviting my wife and me to dinner and me getting permission to attend. It was one of the most boring evenings I've had.

Q: I would have thought the food would have been great.

WALKER: The food was great. But there was not after dinner conversation. Four of them spoke English. They showed us a film of magicians. There is enough slight of hand when you see magicians face to face. You can imagine what goes on in film. That and a film of a Chinese circus. No one talked. We did have a watch at that time on the Chinese support of the Rhodesian guerrilla activities. We were trying to promote a diplomatic settlement in Rhodesia. The Chinese were very much supporting the guerrillas not only in Rhodesia but also in South Africa and in Namibia. So, we were trying to watch what they were doing there, which was at counterpoints with what we were trying to do diplomatically for a peaceful solution in Rhodesia and in Namibia and in South Africa.

Two little vignettes on that caught up with me later in my career when I was in South Africa and I made a visit to Namibia. I wanted to meet some of the oppositionists there. One was a lady named Ollie Abrams. I went to call on her in and she said, "Oh, Howard, I know you from Tanzania. I used to be the gym teacher of your daughter Wendy at the school there!" So, these things catch up with you.

The other was when later in my career I was vice president of the National Defense University. I went to China with some students and others from the university. Our control officer, the person who was showing us around as we went to our meetings, and I were having a drink one night and found out we were in Tanzania at the same time. But he was upcountry in the guerrilla camps helping to train them.

Q: Did Mozambique play any role at this time? This was shortly after the Portuguese revolution and when the Portuguese had pulled out.

WALKER: Mozambique was independent when I was there. The connection came in the frontline group of states where Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana were playing this role of trying to help in the negotiations. Mugabe, today's president of Zimbabwe, at that time was the leader of one of the two major guerrilla groups. He was headquartered in Maputo, Mozambique. Whenever there were these conferences on Rhodesian negotiations and the frontline states and the contact group, Mugabe would be there. Sometimes these contacts were held often in Dar Es Salaam. Nyerere was a leader of the frontline states as the elder statesman. When they would come to Dar Es Salaam, Mugabe was there, as was Joshua Nkomo, who was his competing nationalist in Rhodesia at the time, and San Njomo from Namibia, a man with whom I was most unimpressed. Mugabe was a terribly articulate guy and has also ruined his country. The leaders of Mozambique would come there. So, in that sense, they played a role in the Rhodesian negotiations. But with Tanzania-Mozambique bilateral relations, we didn't get very much involved in that.

Q: Let's turn to South Africa. You were there from when to when?

WALKER: From 1979 to 1982.

Q: You mentioned your kids were in prep school. Where was that?

WALKER: They were in Northfield Mt. Hermon in Massachusetts. My wife and I came to see that one's child going away to boarding school, even if it's a good experience, is much worse on the parents than it is on the children. Ours had a good experience. Their school is a place that had a lot of Foreign Service children and people from international backgrounds. The faculty and staff are used to the particular problems of that group, e.g., making sure that students have their passports before they travel home.

Q: Where are they located?

WALKER: They're now both back here in Bethesda. My son is a lawyer and an IT Specialist with a group that has a contract with the Department of Justice. My daughter just got her Ph.D. in social anthropology and has been doing some contract work with the World Bank. She just got back from Benin.

Q: '79-'82. This was when the Carter administration was in.

WALKER: Carter was when I went to Preterig and very soon thereafter Reagan came in '81.

Q: What was the situation vis a vis the U.S. and South Africa in '79?

WALKER: In '79, Carter was still President. We had been on a roll in the Rhodesian negotiations, very close to a successful denouement of that, and the Namibia negotiations, in which I had been involved, both of those, as members of the contact group in Tanzania. South Africa was always thought to be the tougher nut, that if we could resolve Rhodesia and Namibia first, there would be a momentum and perhaps a model of sorts that not only the whites in South Africa could see that the world wasn't coming to an end if these countries became black ruled, but the black rulers themselves would in power behave with the responsibility of having power rather than not. So when I got to South Africa, we had some issues in South Africa, but the focus was not trying to resolve those but to try to deal with Rhodesia and Namibia first. Nonetheless, there was a strong human rights dimension to our policy there in terms of trying to bring some change to the racial apartheid policy of the South African government. When I arrived, our contacts with the government, the Nationalist Party, were good but not superb. Bill Edmondson was ambassador at the time. He had previously been there as DCM. Just before he went there, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa with the southern Africa portfolio. P.W. Botha was the president. Although he was not as Neanderthal as some of his predecessors had been, he still not only had no notion whatsoever of majority rule, black rule, but very little acceptance of any serious black involvement in government. It was a classic apartheid policy in the sense that real power remained in the hands of whites and particularly in the hands of Afrikaners, and some leeway was given to the involvement of Coloreds, who were thought to be more Afrikaner than African but no role for blacks outside of the homelands, the areas that were to be set aside for their own "countries". So, it was a very difficult assignment in that human rights sense.

I nonetheless looked forward to the assignment. It was an assignment that had some professional important issues. Moreover, and every Foreign Service officer will look at it this way, it was an assignment in a country whose issues were paid attention to back in Washington. Foreign Service officers are concerned about that not only because that helps promotion but also, if you spend a lot of time thinking, writing, and researching an issue, you want someone who counts to read it. I was going to a place where I thought what I wrote and edited would be read.

Q: At the end of the Carter administration, what was the policy towards South Africa?

WALKER: The policy was strongly against apartheid, but that was secondary to Rhodesia and Namibia. Those were the first priority things to handle. The policy of "constructive engagement" with the regard of South Africa government was a new policy brought in by the Reagan people. The policy of the Carter people by contrast was public, adamant, clear opposition to apartheid. That did not mean backing that up with great resources to change things. It meant essentially a lot of rhetorical and other symbolic criticism. It meant a lot of proactive encouragement from Washington for the embassy to take proactive measures to demonstrate the American opposition to the policy of apartheid and to seek out and cultivate those who were opposed to it within South Africa. Principally, that turned out to be within the white opposition community, particularly among English speakers and what came to be called the Verlighte wing of Afrikaners, the enlightened wing. Contact within the black community and the Colored community was encouraged but not spurred. For all of the human rights activism of the Carter government, they were not unrealistic in South Africa and in many other parts of the world. This was my experience in Jordan and Tanzania. One was trying to bring about change perhaps more so or more seemingly so than under the Reagan administration, but the Carter people also realized that the U.S. had some interests and that actions have consequences and you want to be careful of not encouraging something that you can't deliver on.

Q: As you got there, how did you see Bill Edmondson's relations with the South African government?

WALKER: They were a bit strained, as almost any ambassador under the Carter administration would be. I think Bill was not always that warmly received by the South African government people from his days as DCM. They knew where he stood. He had to take some messages, as any ambassador would, of strong criticism in to the South African government as instructed by Washington and that did not set well with them. Bill also from his DCM days had a number of contacts particularly in the white liberal establishment that did not please the government. In addition, some specific things happened that caused the government of South Africa to want to distance itself from almost any American ambassador. There was a problem with a Defense attachï¿½ and use of his airplane for espionage activities. There was a problem that came up not long after my arrival what we were convinced were the South Africans attempting to develop a nuclear weapon. Bill had to bell that cat. That wouldn't have endeared him to them. In addition, our embassy at that time when I arrived was much more active in cultivating the black African community and the Colored dissident community than I had seen us do with potential opposition in Jordan (although still limited as I mentioned earlier). One, one reason was that despite all of the despicable racial policies of the South African government, they had a number of democratic procedures both in terms of parliamentary government and parliamentary procedure and the media and civil society, the judiciary that made opposition more accessible to diplomats. That said, they thought of themselves as in a crisis security situation which in their view justified some abridgement of those civil liberties which applied in any event only to the white community. But even there, there was intimidation of media, detentions of white dissidents. But there was open debate in parliament, criticism of the kind you would see very rarely in other parts of the world outside of what we normally think of as western democratic countries. Even within the black communities, there were no efforts formally to restrict our access to them. We had during the Carter days and maybe before some restrictions of our own. For example, we couldn't go to the homelands, particularly Transkei, because that was considered symbolically endorsing that aspect of apartheid policy. But our Political Section, actively sought out and cultivated oppositionists in the, We then had a political officer whose portfolio was the black community and the Colored and Indian community. We had another officer whose portfolio was Afrikaaner, including opposition within the Afrikaaner community. They had from the embassy and from Washington to do that. Officer Sim Moats, who handled the black community, had excellent contacts with and access to people including Bishop Tutu, Mandela's wife Winnie, to black trade unions, the black media, professionals... There was a doctor in Soweto who was a political leader and Sim knew him very well. That said, we did not have good contacts with the really very militant sectors of the black and Colored communities, who were generally already underground. Today, when I go back to teach at a couple of universities there during part of the year, some of my students are children of those militant leaders who were in exile at the time. Fascinating students who, by the way, are first-rate academically. It's amazing to see how well they were educated in exile, whicIn any event, we did not have contacts with black organizations that were banned by the government, like the African National Congress and the PanAfrican Congress. We didn't have access to them because it wasn't legal to have those organizations. Still, we covered well the black protest movements in Port Elizabeth among the automobile workers. We sent Sim down there. But we did not have access to the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress. Today, some of those people's children are my students. The guy who today is the Minister of Finance is a Thatcherite economist these days and is taking South Africa on a model private enterprise path but he was at that earlier time a Trotskyite. He was the kind of guy I wish I had known and talked to, but it was difficult to do. But our access to opposition and potential opposition was exponentially higher than it was in most of the rest of the non-western world.

Q: Did you have problems with particularly your more junior officers in reigning them in? I could see where you have a situation such as apartheid, which is abhorrent, and young people are more inclined to say, "This is wrong. I'm going to show my solidarity with them rather than play the role of the United States representative."

WALKER: The situation was ripe for that, but it didn't happen. I think by comparison, I had a case we'll talk about later in Madagascar with a very junior political officer keeping her with some perspective. But certainly the situation in South Africa was ripe for our officer covering the black community, where he saw the injustices we only read about and met the people and talked to the people who were suffering. But I rarely had as DCM occasion to massage a report in the sense of making sure that it was not only accurate, which they always were B I never had a problem with that - but was also balanced in the sense of being effective as an instrument to shape policy back in Washington. If you come in with a report that seems unbalanced, you're not going to have a place at the table. I used to have discussions on this matter with the political counselor from time to time, who is a man of great principle, Jay Taylor, and I don't say that to imply that he's not a man who understands the virtues of pragmatism as well. From my own perch, maybe from my own personal perspective, I was looking at a wider canvas in terms of things that we had to do.

Now, let me say that the reaching out we did in the non-white community was testing the margins in terms of both who we invited to our representation functions and our efforts to go out into the community as well. One of the key things the American embassy did at that time, more than any other embassy in town, and many of my contacts who subsequently became my lasting friends to this day in the non-white community told me - and this isn't my house exclusively; it's all the way from the ambassador's residence to all the members of the embassy in our representational functions - our invitations to them provided them not only a chance to meet and be met by others in South Africa but one of them said to me in his toast at a farewell dinner he gave to my wife and me, "You know, I found you made us feel safe." That was a good feeling. When we would invite them under the restrictions at the time, blacks could not be in certain parts of the country or the town- (end of tape)

-couldn't be in certain parts of town at certain hours without a pass. In order to have a pass, you had to demonstrate that you had work there that was legal work. Well, we were inviting them not for work but to have a meal and it was our invitation that got them past these roadblocks.

But to get back to your question, we did have contacts across the spectrum with the exception of the militant guerrilla wing of the black community and the ANC and PAC. Most of them were out of the country. But we did have with the trade unions and the student groups and they were at the edge of what was legally permissible. So, in our assessments of political stability, we were able to report accurately and usefully on dissent, but we couldn't measure it. We couldn't say, "This dissent is at 60% or 85%" because we weren't sure we were getting everyone and we certainly were not getting the most militant ones.

Q: How were we seeing the ANC and its leadership? Was Mandela just a name?

WALKER: Mandela was on Robin Island. So far as we knew, he had very little influence on what was going on, except for great symbolic influence to people. He had no operational influence. The ANC was branded by the South African government as communist and terrorist. We didn't join in that. But the leadership was outside the country in guerrilla training camps in Zambia or Tanzania or in offices in other places like London which the South African government attacked clandestinely with letter bombs and other things. But if contact were to be made, it would be made there. That depended on the ambassador in these places. I understand that in London, our ambassador there was not keen to have the embassy getting in touch with the ANC people in London.

Q: We're still talking about the Carter period. What role were other embassies playing, particularly the western democracies?

WALKER: More safe than ours with the government, the French especially so. At a time when we had a voluntary arms embargo on South Africa, they were selling Mirages to the South Africans. The French ambassador when he had his national day, I was shocked to see him give part of his address in Afrikaans. That showed a virtuosity with languages but probably was not a politically neutral thing to do. But that pales in comparison to what one of our American ambassadors did, I learned, much before I got there and that is to go hunting on Robin Island with the president of South Africa.

Q: This is where Mandela was being held.

WALKER: Yes. The Brits were conducting good, classic diplomacy there. They were not out in front but they were not dragging their feet. The Germans... We did a lot in common in the contact group there - the British, the French, the Germans, the Canadians, and ourselves - on Rhodesia and Namibian matters still. Some of that got over from time to time to "What do you think is going on in South Africa and what should we be doing there?" But there was no multilateral diplomatic efforts with regards to South Africa with our European colleagues in the way that we did have a multilateral diplomacy with them on Rhodesia and Namibia.

Q: What were we doing regarding American industry there?

WALKER: A lot of the American companies had left by the time I got there. But the Sullivan principles, which committed them to forms of affirmative action with their employees applying to the Ford Motor Company and some of the oil companies and banks and others, a lot of those left as a result of sanctions legislation that was to come later. But we supported the Sullivan principles. We supported them not only in our private diplomacy, in our discussions, every time we would have a representation dinner or take someone to lunch from the government, certainly with the white and black opposition, I can remember time and again laying out our rationale and hearing ad infinitum theirs, but we pushed for change. In our public diplomacy, in our USIS efforts there in terms of the scholarships we gave and the American visitors in the Visitors Program, and the speakers we brought in, it was very much of being on the side of the angels.

Q: When you had your night thoughts, when no one else was around, what did you think about whither South Africa? I was in INR in African Affairs in the very early '60s and the general feeling was that it was going to end of with the night of long knives with the blacks massacring the whites. What was the feeling when you were there about where this thing would end up?WALKER: My personal feeling?

Q: Yes.

WALKER: A couple of general thoughts. I never thought that was going to happen. One of the things that is striking about South African blacks is their lack of bitterness. I concluded that did not grow out of powerless. They just aren't bitter people. Every person I have ever met who has come off of Robin Island as a former prisoner is much less bitter than they have any right to be. I have asked them sometimes, "Why?" I've asked people in very senior positions and students. One is the education sessions that Mandela and Sesulu and others on Robin Island had with the other prisoners. That was a university. The point they got over again and again is that "Bitterness won't pay. It doesn't pay not only for the future of our governing this country but for your own psychic balance." Another part of that is the notion that they have ocommunity. So, I never felt that there would be revenge. The PAC had the slogan: "One settler, one bullet," but the PAC was marginal. The African National Congress was always an inclusive, integrationist organization. Back in the '20s... It wasn't anti-white. It was an anti-discrimination organization. So, that's one. I never thought it would be a bloodbath, partly because they didn't have the power. They didn't have that mindset.

The other thoughts I had when I was there... I brought with me from my assignments elsewhere in Africa and the world that this was a great country. This was a rich country. This was a developed country. I remember how struck I was when my wife and I left Tanzania, where maybe two or three international flights come in a week and everybody goes out to see the big KLM or PanAm plane come in to land, but at the airport in Johannesburg, one saw these big 707, 747 tails lined up like you see in a major developed. You realized this was a real country, a real modern country. Especially coming from Tanzania, where I'd seen what redistributive policies and an ideological socialist did to that country. My hope was that it would not happen in South Africa - populism gone amuck.

I remember one trip I made when I was in South Africa with the agricultural attachï¿½. He was going upcountry to look at farming and I went along with him. We went to this tomato farm that used the most modern agricultural techniques. You'd drive along these rural areas and see these big irrigation and water systems and grain and other things as far as the eye could see. You don't see that in a lot of parts of the world. So this was modern technology. They were producing enough food for themselves and for export and productivity was high. Even the land wasn't always that good. Anyhow, we went to this tomato farm. It was intense production techniques, packaging, and marketing. Then I saw the way the guy's farm laborers lived. It was horrendous. I can't imagine a horror film of medieval Europe in which the peasants lived more abysmally, stacked up two and three high in these wooden beds in these little shacks for the farmers to live in. Our own migrant farmers in this country live bad enough. But this almost made me vomit. It looked so horrible. It looked to me like pictures you see of slave ships, of people crowded in like that.

The day went on and we toured some more. We were staying at this farmer's house. As so often is the case with people who do pretty cruel things to their fellow man, if they don't see you in that context, they come across as rather decent people. We were having a conversation. You can't talk to any South African at that time or now without talking about "the problem." As with the Jordanians and the Israelis, they have thought this through step by step. So, after coffee, we were talking about these problems and he turned to me and said, "Well, tell me: what do you think we should do." Before I answered, I recall a number of thoughts coming across my mind. One was this horror that I saw that day. Two was the lessons of the "Art of the Possible." Three was what I had seen in Tanzania, a country ruined. So, I guess the thrust of my answer to him was, "Maintain your levels of production" because so much else depends on that as having the wealth to do a number of other things that had to be done, like build schools and good housing for those people out there. He was so taken by that. Then later that night, I regretted that so much. I was right. They needed to maintain their levels of production. Thank goodness that's what the current ANC government is putting the focus on. But I later was so ashamed of myself for not following through and saying, "But in order that the country have the wealth to do something about those abysmal conditions in which you have your workers living." I guess I rationalized it at the moment by saying, "If I get into that now, I'm going to lose him on some other points I want to make to him." But getting back to your question, one of the themes I was thinking about at the time is that I thought the political future of South Africa did not have this Armageddon scene. But it could have a scene in which the tremendous advantage South Africa has on that continent not only for its own people but for that region to maintain that engine of economic growth was undermined. One had to be careful that that didn't happen. And on the political side, my view at that time was that political change in order to maintain all of these things, in order to maintain political stability and economic growth, would have to be more gradual. So, I saw in the policy of Afrikaners Verichtigs, enlightened people, a kind of change that would by stages bring the non-white community into power, without destroying the country's economic growth. I think I was wrong on that, partly because we really didn't know the ANC. We didn't know the people on Robin Island. We didn't get reporting from Embassy London on people like Mbeki, who was the ANC representative there at the time, to understand that if power were more quickly brought to this leadership, it not only would be better for political stability in the sense of upstaging any demagogues who might want to do something more drastic, but that this was a kind of leadership that wasn't likely to plunge the country into economic disaster. So, my own view of the road ahead for South Africa was much more moderate than I would have taken had we known the people who later came to power.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. You were in South Africa from '79-'82. We've been talking about the Carter period. Maybe we should get into both the election of 1980 and the rhetoric.WALKER: There was quite an abrupt change coming out of the State Department.

Q: We'll talk about that.

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Today is August 29, 2002. How did the campaign of 1980 in the U.S...? Were you following that closely in South Africa to see what it meant for South Africa?

WALKER: I think we all assumed that if the Reagan Republicans won over the Carter Democrats, there would be a change in focus and a change in tone from the Carter administration - and mind you, when you talk about diplomacy and the conduct of diplomacy in non-front burner placeeven though South Africa was more front burner than some other Southern Hemisphere places - you're talking about diplomacy whose design is mostly at the Assistant Secretary level. Under the Carter people, under Dick Moose as Secretary, theras well as the very active and effective participation of the field. We assumed that there would be a change the Assistant Secretary and that would affect, depending on the person, the conduct of diplomacy insofar as the Assistant Secretary for Africa would have a major input into the policy questions in Washington, it would affect not only the conduct but the content of policy. We're talking some 20 years ago. I don't remember spending a lot of time thinking about what the change in administration after the elections would mean for our policy in South Africa. Most of us as Americans in general thought about it in terms of what it would mean for issues beyond and more important than our own portfolios.

Q: Were your contacts in South Africa looking at this or saying, "Wait until after the elections?" Did you have the feeling that they were watching this? Did they care?

WALKER: I did not. When the election took place, I was a relatively newly arrived deputy chief of mission, not chief of mission. So, my contacts as DCM would not have been at the highest level. As a new person, I was just getting my sea legs in South Africa. So, I don't remember that. What I do recall, after the election and by the time I had met a number of contacts and during periods of chargeship, there was a great admiration on the part of the government of the day, the white Afrikaaner, the national party, for the Reagan administration and as it came to be for the way U.S. policy in South Africa was conducted. I remember very well when I was charge during one period and the foreign minister, Pik Botha, had an occasion to talk with me about President Reagan. It was on an issue that we may get to later in which the South African government was moving even further to the right on some issues than the Reagan administration, or Chet Crocker would have wanted. Pik said to me, "We just don't want to make things more difficult for 'that great man.'" He was talking about Ronald Reagan. So, there was a great deal of admiration. What that admiration was based on beyond an expectation that they could do business better with the Reagan administration, I don't know. Whether it was based on ideological or political principles, commonalities, other than a general conservative one of gradual change, I don't know.

Q: How were you picking up the change from the African Bureau perspective and what you were getting? I would imagine that you all would be looking rather closely to see who was going to be the head of Africa and Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. This had been a crucial hotplate in our diplomacy. What were you getting from your colleagues about the change?

WALKER: On the question of who would be Assistant Secretary and how the batting lineup was being shaped, I don't remember we got much information or had much correspondence on that. My recollection is that it took a long time for the Reagan administration to fill its senior positions on Africa. I don't remember offhand how long it took for that to be filled. But I don't remember a long period of hiatus there. As to what the new team wanted, what it expected policy to be, we didn't have to wait long. I could go back and find out the exact dates. My impression is that it didn't take very long for Crocker, who was not by any means new to Africa or southern Africa issues and who was a man who was a thinker, an intellectual on these matters as well, for him to get out to the field what his own approach was, but not only his own approach, but to get himself out to the field and others on the senior team to come out. They came out and it was soon clear both from the correspondence we got in cables plus from what we got from the visitors coming out that one big change in the conduct of our policy in South Africa and indeed in all Africa would be that it would be much more closely held and directed from the Africa Bureau in Washington, and that the exciting and I think productive interaction between Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Moose and ambassadors in the field, particularly in the frontline states, was coming to an end. I was DCM in Tanzania and then DCM in South Africa, so during those times we were as a frontline state very much involved in the issues of Rhodesia and Namibia and to some degree South Africa. There was a continual interchange and dialogue between Washington and the field under Moose on these matters which I thought as a Foreign Service was a model of how diplomatic professionalism could be wedded to political leadership back at home in the conduct of foreign policy. It became clear very quickly from South Africa - and I'm sure it did from some other embassies in other capitals in Africa - that that kind of dialogue was not going to be a part of the system, not that Chet in any way discouraged inputs or even dissent but that it was not going to be a dialogue of equals in the search for policy that we knew before.

Q: Was your ambassador in South Africa, Bill Edmondson, leave immediately?

WALKER: He left very quickly and under embarrassing - indeed I would even say rude - circumstances on the part of the Reagan administration. He had, as all ambassadors do with a change of administration, submitted his letter of resignation. It takes time for these things to be processed and even more time for a new ambassador to be identified, vetted, nominated, and go through all of the procedures and get out to the field. During that period, we had a very high level visit led by Judge Clark, who at that time was head of the NSC, I believe, and some other people on his team. They came out and had absolutely nothing to do with the American ambassador. I remember we had gotten together under Bill Edmondson's leadership the normal briefings and appointments and representation schedule to be helpful to a visiting team, particularly to a high level team like that. They came in. I don't know the nature of the conversation that Ambassador Edmondson and Judge Clark had privately, but I do know that in the meetings that we arranged at Judge Clark's request - and understandable request - for him with the state president, P.W. Botha, Judge Clark did not take the American ambassador to that meeting. That was a very clear signal - and I'm sure quite an intentional signal - that the new administration intended a dramatic change in direction because Bill Edmondson was not only a loyal implementer of the Carter administration's policy, he personally believed in it. He was a person who was an Africa hand, had assignments early on in Tanganyika Ghana; he had been DCM in Zambia; DCM before in South Africa. So, he had a point of view that was liberal and everyone knew that. But he was also a very professional Foreign Service officer and would have loyally carried out the instructions of his government while trying to influence them. But not even taking him to that meeting was a dramatic signal, as it was meant to be, by the Clark team to the South African government that there would be a dramatic change. A consequence of that, of course, was that it absolutely crippled the American ambassador for the rest of his stay there in the rest of his dealings with the South African government.

Q: You were charge for how long?

WALKER: I was charge for at least a year, possibly a little longer - after Bill Edmondson left. It was a difficult job to find an ambassador. I later found out from not only Chet Crocker's book but my discussions with him why that was so. Chet is a Republican, but I would think a Republican of the Rockefeller ring. Chet had a hell of a time getting agreement in Washington on who would be an ambassador to South Africa. He had his preferences, but all kinds of people - and some quite weird - were attempted to be thrust on him, including the chief of police of Los Angeles, who had a terrible reputation as far as race relations and respect for democratic processes are concerned. So, it took a long time to get an ambassador out there. During that period, I was charge. It was during this time that the South African government decided that they wanted me to be the next U.S. ambassador to South Africa. I remember Pik Botha, the foreign minister, raising this question with me once in one of my meetings with him in the foreign ministry. He said, "We'd really like to have you come back as ambassador. How do we do that?" I was flattered, though I must say I wasn't chomping at the bit for that opportunity. It would have been a great career move for me to move up to an ambassador of a mission of that size and importance in our Africa policy. But I wasn't sure that having been in South Africa going on three years, I wanted to stay any longer for quite personal reasons. Professionally, it would have been a super move. Personally, I found it a hardship post. It was very difficult for me and for my wife, not to say that we couldn't sleep at night - we did sleep - and not to say that we felt a sense of isolation - we had a lot of friends there. For reasons I mentioned before, 90% white and Colored. But they were good friends and not all English speaking liberals, Afrikaaner liberals, Coloreds, and others. So, it wasn't a miserable time, but it was not a very happy time. Living in any regime that is so violating of human rights as that government and society was, you felt that you were really serving your country at some cost to your own psychological well being. So, I wasn't for all of those reasons thrilled about the idea of spending another three years in South Africa, although professionally it would have been a wonderful opportunity not only for me professionally, but as one anticipated, change would be coming at some increasing pace, of being in a position to make one's own contribution to that. As I told the foreign minister at the time, I knew at that time that my name had gone forward for another ambassadorship. That was to Togo. Though that was by no means professionally as rewarding as it would have been in South Africa, nonetheless, I was looking forward to it. One, it was my first occasion to run my own ship. Secondly, Togo was going to be on the Security Council during that session which increased a bit the attractiveness of it professionally. Pik asked how they could influence that. He said, "I have this cleared with the state president and others. We want to let Washington know that it's you we want." Well, the first thing I did was to send an "eyes only" cable off to Chet Crocker saying, "Guess what the foreign minister talked to me about today. I want to give you a heads up. Pik asked me how they choose ambassadors. I explained that process, including the process of State making its recommendations to the White House through the Deputy Secretary's committee on these matters. Botha said, 'Well, we will send our ambassador in to see the Deputy Secretary, but it's too bad we no longer have our own contact in the White House.'" At that time, Richard Allan had been replaced. Pik Botha very clearly intimated that the South Africans were on very good terms with Dick Allan and they felt that if he were still there, they would have a much better chance of getting what they would have wanted in this case as far as my own nomination was concerned. I later asked Chet Crocker about this three or four years ago. He really couldn't remember. I asked the guy in Capetown who was the South African ambassador to Washington at the time. He is retired in Capetown and I see him, as I live there four or five months a year. I see him from time to time. I asked him about it. He couldn't recall it either. I know from the guy who was state's Office Director for at the time and from Desk Officer of South Africa. The South African ambassador went to see our Deputy Secretary and conveyed this message, that this is what they wanted. I got a cable back from the Department. I think it was from Chet. It said, "What you said they were going to do they, in fact, did do. They came in to see the Deputy Secretary today."

So, in any event, what happened, I later learned from Chet, was that he heard thunder on the right in terms of nominating the new American ambassador and proposed his own man, who he thought would keep him from having to accept some of the very right wingers being pressed on him. Chet's choice was Herman Nickel, who had been a writer for "Fortune" and "Time" magazines, who was intelligent and, as I later got to know Herman, very personable, but fully accepting the policy position that Chet was taking of constructive engagement in South Africa, a position I have no doubt that a professional career Foreign Service officer would have accepted and conducted as well for professional reasons. In any event, Herman Nickel was the choice of Chet not only because of Herman's competence but because he was likely to be able to survive the White House vetting process.

Q: Nickel came out.

WALKER: By the time Nickel came out, I had left. I left and a new DCM came out. That was Walter Stadtler. I had left, so there was no overlap between me and Herman Nickel. Walter came out at least a month or two before I left.

Q: While you were charge, were you beginning to get things spelling out what "constructive engagement" meant? What did it mean?

WALKER: Constructive engagement meant what it means in our current policy with regard to China or with regard to Russia. It means that you have your eye on a policy objective but you believe that that policy objective can best be achieved by working with and persuading the government of the day rather than blatantly opposing it with the view of, if not replacing it, making it weaker. So, constructive engagement with regard to South Africa was a policy of trying to work with the South African government in bringing about as much change as possible in South Africa's internal racial policies and particularly with regard to its policy with regard to the independence of Namibia. There were other dimensions to it, too. Constructive engagement was a policy that was also consistent with the wider foreign policy objectives we had in southern Africa vis a vis the Cubans and the Soviet Union. That is, trying to manage change in the racial policies of South Africa and in the independence of Namibia in such a way that did not benefit the larger Cold War objectives of the Soviet Union or of Cuba.

Q: Were there any issues that came up in the time that you were charge that stick in your mind?

WALKER: In the sense of differences with Washington?

Q: Dealing with the South African government. Was there a period in Washington while you were there of marking time while Crocker got in and got settled in?

WALKER: I don't recall any. I don't recall that there was a long period of time between the time that Dick Moose left and Chet Crocker came in in which we could wing it.

One of the things I remember rather vividly as occurring early on after Crocker's team took over - I don't remember how long it was - is that it had to do with removals from one of the squatter camps outside of Capetown. The embassy was down in Capetown at that time. It was cold. It was in the winter. It was raining. This was another episode of the authorities going in and knocking down the shacks that these squatters had put up and forcing them out with literally nowhere to go. I reported this - or I signed off on cables. I don't remember if I wrote it or not - for the human rights tragedy it was. I don't recall exactly what recommendation I made, but it was a recommendation to show publicly in South Africa and be in the position to show publicly internationally, including back in the U.S., that the U.S. embassy in South Africa condemned or was highly critical of what the government was doing in the squatter camps. I got back a very biting instruction from Washington that that was not at all what the business of the embassy was as far as the policy of the United States at that time. I remember that very, very dramatically because I got burned.

Another thing I remember about the change in policy was some of these visitors who came up. One of them was a delegation - I can't remember who led it. On this delegation was a young fellow named Allan Keyes, a black American, a Republican. We had briefings with him. We assumed they wanted to learn something about South Africa. They didn't want to learn about South Africa. They wanted to instruct the embassy about South Africa and the new view of South Africa. It was particularly true of Mr. Keyes. In his presentation to us on constitutional issues, which I thought was pedantic but pedantic in a sophomoric sense - it was the kind of thing that you'd expect to hear from undergraduates who were recently exposed to theories of constitutional law. We were lectured about what kind of constitutional arrangements the embassy should be pushing for in a new South Africa. I thought that that was, one, not the best way to handle the coordination of diplomacy in terms of tapping the contributions that professional diplomats might be able to make. But I also saw it as a cold wind of a new ideological bent to the right in our policy with regard to South Africa.

Q: When somebody like that comes out and they're not your boss - these are people coming out who are part of a visiting delegation - what do you do, sort of smile and say, "That's very interesting" and tuck it away but there is nothing you act on?

WALKER: Any delegation that comes out, you assume they come out to learn and you try to arrange a program for them that will be as instructive as possible. You also assume that maybe you can learn something from them. You listen and hope that a dialogue will ensue between. It was the latter part of that that was absolutely missing.

Q: Did you find that you had problems working with the younger officers who I would assume were engaged in wanting to do something about South Africa, particularly the apartheid, and have a Reagan administration come in, I would think there would be unhappiness and you'd have to work to make sure that they were professional about this and not sounding off?

WALKER: I didn't find that at all. We had officers in the embassy, particularly in the Political Section, such as Sim Moats, who followed black politics and had a lot of contacts from Winnie Mandela to Bishop Tutu at that time. That was his portfolio. He did very well in that not only because he had empathy for the position of blacks in South Africa but because professionally he took great interest in it. We had another officer who followed white politics, including Afrikaanerdom, and including the liberal or Verighte wing of Afrikaaners. He had an interest in that. In neither of those cases did I get a scintilla of indication that they could not conduct the Africa policy of a new administration that was duly elected in a democratic way in the United States or that they would not do it. I never had any problem with their doing that. The same holds true with other parts of the embassy where we had younger officers, in the Economic Section, the Consular Section, and USIA, where we had an Afro-American cultural affairs officer whose sympathies were understandable for a number of reasons with change in South Africa. But I never had a problem as either DCM or charge of trying to get these officers to act professionally, because they were professional. We had some different points of view that didn't begin with the Reagan administration on some issues of how we would interpret events, how they should be analyzed and reported, but that's part of the vigor of an embassy. But I never had any close approach to the sort of thing I think you're talking about.

Q: Did you get involved in negotiations over Namibia during the time you were charge?

WALKER: I did. First of all, there was the contact group of a number of countries - the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, and Canada, who were set up to work very closely in a coordinated diplomacy with regard to the South Africans on Namibia, as we had done earlier on Rhodesia. As charge, when it came the United States' time to host those meetings, I hosted them in our embassy and I attended them in other embassies. So, I was very much involved in the coordinating end on the contact group. But even more than that, I got very much involved in our bilateral diplomacy with the South Africans on Namibia. We did a lot within the contact group and did a lot bilaterally as well, and particularly Crocker, who was well up on this. I must say, Chet came to trust and to value my input, my contributions, to our Namibia diplomacy with the South Africans or as he stated in his later book on our Namibia diplomacy. I supported that diplomacy not only because that was the diplomacy of the U.S. government, which I represented, but in my own view, it was necessary to bringing about movement towards independence in Namibia that the U.S. to work very closely with the South African government in doing that. So, I spent a lot of my time - sometimes 90 minutes on the telephone - with the foreign minister who had called me to talk late into the evening or an hour or two in the foreign ministry. So, I got very much involved in the implementation or the conduct of our diplomacy on that not only in trying to present accurately to Washington what the South African position was on this and to the South Africans what the U.S. position was, but in making from time to time some recommendations on tactics for us to use. I remember one occasion when Chet was coming out for a meeting with the South Africans. The contact group wanted to arrange a contact group meeting which Chet would attend with the foreign minister. I suggested that we do that because it was important for reasons that Crocker understood very well to maintain that contact group. But also we had reached in some aspects of the negotiations where we had to reassure the South Africans of the United States position and use our leverage with the South Africans to get them to do some things. I suggested in that context to Chet that, "When you come out with the contact group meeting, I arrange a discreet occasion (not to say a secret one) when you can meet separately with some key members of the South Africa Foreign Team?" In this case, it was what we would call the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a very senior military person to have some discussions on something that Washington believed - and the embassy certainly supported that belief - that we might get the South Africans to do that could move things forward in Namibia. That tactical recommendation I made was accepted enthusiastically. I remember getting a cable back "eyes only" from Chet saying, "This is exactly the kind of maneuver that we want to do to move things forward with the South "Africans."

Q: Did you have the feeling that this last period before you left there that the South Africans were warming to the idea of getting this Namibia thing off the plate and settle it?

WALKER: No, I didn't. Things got worse after I left. The South Africans put in even more force. That diplomacy went on for a number of reasons. There was a conflict within the South African leadership itself of what was the best way to go in Namibia and on internal change. As in any government, there were progressives and reactionaries. I don't recall any feeling that things were moving towards a resolution of Namibia very quickly. The South Africans had not had the occasion to see yet how costly greater military involvement on their part would be. They hadn't got burned enough.

Q: Did Nelson Mandela come up at all?

WALKER: No, Mandela at that time was still on Robin Island. There was never a question of any release of him. There was great resentment about our seeing his wife, Winnie Mandela, but we continued to do so. There were people calling for his release who we saw. But he didn't come out. What did not emerge during my time was any sense that the government was moving in any foreseeable future towards release of Mandela or towards black majority rule. The whole emphasis was to create conditions in which that aspect of apartheid, "petty apartheid," as P.W. Botha called, it which was humiliating to people; could be reduced, but the notion of maintaining a system in which whites maintained political power and with it economic power was never broached. They never acknowledged that humiliation of non-whites was the core of and inseparable from "grand apartheid." The movement at that time was to provide institutional mechanisms for certain people who were not in the white community, namely Coloreds and Indians, to have mechanisms in which they could legitimately take part in government but always as very junior partners. Some refused to have anything to do with that. Others saw it as an opportunity for self-advancement. Others saw it as half a loaf to push things further along. That's about where we were when I was there in 1981.

Q: You left there when?

WALKER: In the spring of 1982 to come back for my preparations to go to Togo.

Q: Were you getting any soundings from the AF Bureau? How were they looking at South Africa?

WALKER: No different from what I knew to be our policy in South Africa when I was out there as charge and DCM. When I came back from South Africa for my preparations - briefings and so on - to go out to Togo, I had a very long meeting with Chet in his office. It was one of the most flattering - and I don't say that in any pejorative sense at all - meetings I've had in which Chet expressed his highest admiration for the way I had run the embassy and conducted diplomacy and coordinated with Washington on that diplomacy. I was quite pleased with that. I had to be a little careful in my preparations to go out to Togo because there were a number of people and places in Washington that wanted to talk to me about South Africa. I had to be careful for a number of reasons. One, I was no longer an American diplomat concerned with South Africa and didn't want to make things more difficult for people who were or to try to interpose myself into something of which I was no longer a part. I also didn't want to weaken in any way back in Washington with the Department of State or others my credibility and influence to do my job as ambassador in Togo. That came up on a number of occasions. The first time it came up was with an organization here in Washington run by Eddie Williams, a guy who I had known for some time and played a crucial role in my going into the Foreign Service. I called on him. Eddie is an Afro-American who was very close to the Humphrey people and whose foundation does very useful work on urban questions. We had lunch and chatted and he asked if I would come over and speak to his staff and fellows on South Africa. I said, "Yes. I want it to be completely off the record." Some of the people on that staff held views very critical of U.S. foreign policy. I didn't mind that. It wasn't my job to defend American foreign policy on South Africa officially anymore. One of the guys on his staff was Roger Wilkins, who had come out during the time I was DCM on a Ford Foundation commission looking into racial issues in South Africa. Wilkinson was very highly critical of U.S. policy. I thought that this might be a rather dicey meeting, but I thought it could be a useful one as well. As it turned out, the day I was to go was the only day that I could have a briefing on my coming Togo responsibilities over at the Department of Defense with someone who it was absolutely critical that I talk to and they talk to me, so I had to cancel that. I have always regretted that. One, I don't like to disappoint someone who has been such a good friend and had been so helpful to me like Williams on that. But I had to cancel it. The other way this came up of having to watch what I still... My South African concern going out to Togo... When I appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for my confirmation to go to Togo, I didn't get a single question about Togo. All of the questions were about South Africa. There were South African newspaper people there and the rest of it. I was very aware that, although I had nothing officially to do with South Africa anymore and I had to be careful about what I was saying because it could be reported back in South Africa in a way that wouldn't be helpful for the continuing conduct of American foreign policy in South Africa, which I continued to think and think to this day was in the context of the times constructive.

Q: You were in Togo from when to when?

WALKER: I was in Togo from '82-'84.

Q: Could you explain Togo's place on the African map and how it was at the time you went out there and then our interests in it?

WALKER: Geographically where it is?

Q: I mean the type of government and so on.WALKER: Togo had a dictatorship run by a guy who came to power by killing his predecessor in the parking lot of the American embassy while he was trying to escape and seek refuge there. Ruthless, dictatorial-

Q: Who was this?

WALKER: Eyadema. The country is very low in terms of U.S. interests. It's small. It has no important geostrategic location. It has no resources that are important to us. It's only importance at that time was that it was about to go on the Security Council, which meant it had a vote on the Security Council. It was about to have its moment in the sun. It promised for me professionally little greater important than trying to win that vote for the U.S. on the Security Council.

Q: Who are the neighbors of Togo?

WALKER: There is Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta at that time), Niger... It has those boundaries because of its curious colonial history. It was once a part of the German Empire along with what was part of British Togoland which now is part of Ghana. Half of the German colony of Togo was taken over by the British and half by the French after World War I as League of Nations mandated territories. The big issue was whether or not they would come to independence jointly. A vote was held and the British part went with as part of Ghana, and because French Togoland at the time was not given an independence option by France.

Q: Had you been briefed by our delegation to the UN? This would have been under Jeanne Kirkpatrick. Were you going out with a UN agenda?

WALKER: Not a UN agenda, but an agenda of U.S. position on a number of issues that might come up at the UN. I did not have a meeting with Jeanne Kirkpatrick before I went out. I met with her when she came out to Togo with a delegation, which is another very interesting story we'll get into later. But my instructions when I went to Togo as ambassador were, first of all, to try to explain as best I could the U.S. position on issues at the UN, some of which came up later while I was there. We had a big Peace Corps program there, and AID. I got briefings by those people in the administration of it. I developed from my reading of the files and talking to other people some ideas of my own of what might be done there a little bit better in both of those operations. The standard briefings from USIA, Commerce, DoD, and others. But mainly it was how to continue to pursue limited U.S. interests in this tyrannical country in a way consistent with human rights objectives, which were not all that high on the order of priority as they were given to me when I went out.

Q: When you got out there and presented your credentials, how did your relationship develop?

WALKER: The relationship when I presented credentials from the beginning was very good with President Eyadema. He began by telling me... This was at a time when the war in the Falklands was trying to be resolved.

Q: Between the United Kingdom and Argentina.

WALKER: That's right. He began by giving me a very long talk about the role of the blue helmets, the UN people out there, and the importance of the Falklands to Britain and a number of other matters. I was struck immediately - one by how well briefed this former military sergeant was, and by how much he wanted to get across to the new American ambassador and through him to the United States that he was a friend, he would be a friend on the Security Council. Just as one of my key objectives was to win Togo's support for our position on the Security Council, I'm sure one of his positions if he had been briefed by his foreign minister but he would know instinctively himself that, look, for two years, here is a card he can play with the Americans. He was playing that card from the very beginning of our meeting there. But I must say, I was also struck by how well he spoke extemporaneously on these matters. If I can jump ahead a bit, throughout my whole time there, this was a guy who was well informed about issues and spoke well about them. This view of him was capped when he and I were sitting in the Oval Office talking to President Reagan. One of the things I arranged was an official visit - not a state visit, but a lower ranked official visit. I think I brought this off because I had the great support of Ambassador Kirkpatrick at the UN and others in the Department because we were able to get... Togo's support of us in the UN for a number of things. I remember sitting in the Oval Office with Ronald Reagan and with Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Damm. Chet Crocker was there, as were some of the White House senior staff people. President Reagan welcomed him and took out several 3x5 cards and literally read from them. I sat there. I said, "Oh, my goodness. What sort of impression is this? The man can't speak off the top of his head. At least they're my suggested speaking points. I recognize them." Reagan literally did not glance at them and then summarize them extemporaneously. He read and put them down. Then Eyadema spoke from the top of his head on a tour d'horizon of things. I said to myself, "Here is this guy who never got beyond a sergeant, never got beyond grade school." He was a sergeant in the military. Okay, a sergeant who assassinated his predecessor, but a sergeant, who had this articulateness and this grasp of the things he wanted to present. He was a guy that I could talk to, but at the same time, he was a man who, as all successful politicians do, understood power. He understood how he got there and was going to make sure that he wasn't going to leave by the same route. So, a lot of what I had to do in winning his support for us at the UN as well as winning his support for some other things we wanted to do in AID and Peace Corps that I thought were good for Togo and the U.S. was based, as it is on these things, on a personal rapport. So, I saw him on a number of occasions. One of the things I did for him which won us some of these things was, he was very concerned about a plot from some Togo dissidents in Ghana to invade and overthrow him. He was convinced that he had evidence on this. There were some skirmishes - before I got there, while I was there, and after I left. But one of them concerned a person who he said was plotting against him. I asked him, "Do you have any intelligence on this that he could share?" One piece of intelligence was very useful. It concerned the person he suspected of plotting in Accra - and on a particular date. We knew from our intelligence that that person wasn't even in Ghana at that time. I was at an official dinner and I said to his Minister of Interior that I had something to mention. So, we went off to the side and I told him this. He went up to the head table, to the president, and told him. The president looked up and looked at me and gave a smile and was very reassured. He was very grateful for that intelligence not only because this guy wasn't there plotting against him, but also because it would allow him to evaluate better the accuracy of some of his own intelligence sources.

Q: What were the population of Togo? Was it a tribal situation or was it mixed with a middle class developing?

WALKER: It's very tribal like every other African country. Not only tribal, it had regional differences, north and south in this case, some east and west (those who were closer to the Akan people of Ghana and those who were closer to the Yoruba people of Benin and going into Nigeria). But the major difference was north and south, as it is in so many of those places in West Africa, because that tribal difference was reinforced by different stages of Westernization - that is to say, different stages of what benefits there were of colonialism in terms of economic development but also of acquiring the skills of a modern economy, western skills which allows one to move ahead. These came for a number of historical reasons more to people in the south, and there was resentment by people in the north. This is true in a number of places in West Africa and was certainly true in Togo. Eyadema is from one of those groups in the north who felt in a disadvantaged position from the colonial experience. These people generally went into the military because that was something that was more open to them. Like any good politician, when he got to power, he directed resources primarily up there.Q: What sort of embassy did you have?

WALKER: A small embassy. We had a DCM; a political-economic officer who was very good, Scott Bellard (I'm happy to see he's gone on to good things after there), another political-economic officer whose career has not been as rewarding as Scott's but who's nonetheless gone on to do solid things. We had one of the largest Peace Corps contingents in Africa and one of the oldest ones. They were doing good work. We had a good AID program. We had a USIA office that did what it could, particularly among the western intelligencia, if I can call it that, in the southern part of the country. And we had not a Defense attachï¿½ posted there but accredited to us and posted in either Ghana or the Ivory Coast. One of the big decisions I had to make shortly after I got there was whether I would invite the Defense attachï¿½ in with his airplane from a neighboring country to fly me up north on some of my initial calls, and whether or not I would include in those calls a military base where the equivalent of Togo's special forces were trained. I decided to take the plane because we did not have a big military program there and it could by no stretch of the imagination be thought to be propping up a dictatorial regime because we didn't have that kind of military assistance program there. I decided to call on the military base, one because I thought it would flatter the president and though it would offend some of his opposition, they would be critical of the U.S. relationship in any event, and the points I would build up with the president to win his support in New York on some matters more than offset that in my view. And I would learn something more about his power base within the military. It was one of the decisions I had to make. One of the things you have to consider in winning the vote of the Togolese on things at the UN is, why did you have to win it? Wouldn't they have voted that way anyhow? Why did you have to pay so much for it? I never thought we paid that much. But you never know. One of the things I remember about that White House visit was, that was the day after the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. A couple of days before was Grenada. One of the things Eyadema said to Reagan was, "I want you to know that I've ordered all flags in Togo to fly at half mast today in honor of the Americans killed in Beirut." Then he said, "We are a small country and we look to you, the United States, to protect us. I have threats from some of my neighbors (He was talking about his dissidents in Ghana that sometimes, he felt, had the support of the government of Ghana). We look to the United States to protect its small friends." Then Reagan just perked up right away because he knew what was coming in Grenada. He said, "We will do that." We were able to get from Togo a greater enthusiasm and support and speaking out in New York than would have occurred if we did not have a diplomacy of seeking that support.

Q: How was our Peace Corps working there?

WALKER: Very well. It was one of the first Peace Corps establishments. It was running very well and doing useful things in agriculture, teaching English as a foreign language, other kinds of instruction around the country. It's one of the things I most delighted in doing when I was there aside from opening up self-help projects around, visiting our Peace Corps volunteers and seeing what they were doing.

Q: Were any other countries interested in Togo?

WALKER: The French. The Brits weren't there. The French were interested, the Germans - both for their past colonial connection and some. The Italians had an honorary person there but they had some contracts there. The Egyptians were there. The soviets were there. The North Koreans were there. But it was not a critical place of great interest, as it wasn't to us before Security Council membership.

Q: Were the French... Sometimes the French get a little bit unhappy with us in West Africa. Did you have any problems with the French there?

WALKER: I had no problem with the French ambassador, both of them - one left soon after I got there. I enjoyed excellent terms with them, as you usually do in small diplomatic communities like that. When they learned of the invitation to visit the White House, the antenna started wiggling and the French ambassador came over to see me. One of the first things I did, without instructions, was to make it clear to him that we had no special agenda and that we had nothing in particularly to ask of Togo other than continued help to us at the U.N., and that there were some things that would be requested of us by the Togolese that we couldn't do, particularly in terms of increase levels of economic assistance. But, the French were there in a relatively big way. I remember when French President Mitterrand came on a state visit. Togo is a remarkable country. Can you imagine it had 65 restaurants in Lome. My diplomatic colleagues from all over that part of West Africa used to come there to eat. The best croissant I've ever had was at the Hotel de Fevrier in Lome. They put on this grand state dinner for Mitterrand's state visit - 1,000 guests, an eight course dinner, every course served with its own separate warm plate... The food was superb. At the end, there was ex-sergeant Eyadema up at the top table with Mitterrand and their entourage, singing French oldies but goodies and having a great time. The French do that very well with their former colonies.

I remember when Mitterrand left, we were at the airport, as chiefs of mission are expected to do to see off heads of state. One of my diplomatic colleagues - I think it was the German - turned to me and said, "Well, what will you be reporting on this visit?" I said, "Well, whatever it is, I will keep in mind that the former American ambassador next door in Benin (which then was Dahomey) reported once a coup d'etat by airgram (the correspondence that goes by ships and takes months to get back) instead of by telegram, for which he received a letter of commendation from Under Secretary for Political Affairs Alexis Johnson, whose inscription read, 'You appreciate that God cares for each little sparrow that falls, but we cannot play in that league.'" The French are not so humble.

Q: You mentioned a visit by Jeanne Kirkpatrick.

WALKER: Yes. Jeanne Kirkpatrick came out with a delegation early on in my tour. I remember it was early on because we gave them a lunch on the terrace, which was not yet air conditioned and the gelatin course that my wife prepared, melted.

Kirkpatrick came out with a delegation that included Libby Dole and the wife of one of these senior guys on Reagan's staff - Meese - and some others. Mrs. Dole was absolutely charming, very friendly. Jeanne Kirkpatrick was a first-rate mind. I took her in Togo to meetings from the President to members of those at the University who were opposed to Eyadema. She was very good with them at the university. I'll never forget when: we were at dinner over at the Hotel Deux Fevrier and I got this call to come to my immediately for a call for Ambassador Kirkpatrick. They wanted her to be the first to know that Secretary of State Al Haig had resigned. This great cheer went up in this delegation led by Jeanne Kirkpatrick that maybe now some things could be done that they wanted.

Q: Were Americans coming there and getting into problems?

WALKER: No, Togo was not a place where we had a lot of American visitors other than other official Americans nearby who used to come there to eat. We had ship visits by naval ships who would go to all the West African ports just to do their useful "show the flag" things. There was some American interest in a phosphate operation, but that wasn't very big. We didn't have a single trade delegation while I was there.

Q: You left there when?

WALKER: In 1984.

Q: What happened? Whither?

WALKER: I came back to the Department to take a sabbatical. Ron Spiers, our Under Secretary for Management, came to Lome and asked what I wanted to do next. I said, "I've been out for a long time and I think it's time to recharge my intellectual batteries. I have an idea that I would like to look into. That is, how do we get Americans to pay more intelligent attention to foreign policy." I got an Una Chapman Cox grant to go off to what was then FSI to an office to do this piece of research. That was a delightful three or four months. I was completely on my own. I designed this thing. What I wound up doing after doing some reading and talking to Public Affairs and others about how do we explain foreign policy to the American public, I went around to a number of places in the U.S. I went to Pittsburgh. I went pub crawling with unemployed steel workers in the bars of Pittsburgh. The next day I'd go to lunch at the Deqaine Club with CEOs and vice presidents of steel companies to get different views. I went off to Iowa to a grain farm and rode around on a tractor with farmers and then sat around their lunch table and saw why farmers know so much about foreign affairs. One, their livelihood depends on it in terms of export sales or competition. This was driven home to me when we were sitting around the kitchen table having lunch at this farm listening to the radio. You had not only the weather, as you imagine farmers are interested in, the prices on the grain exchange in Chicago, but also things that were happening around the world - instability or crises that could affect the price of grain. They were very well informed. I went out to Silicon Valley and talked to people. I went to Houston because that's a major port for the export of grain and other things. I went to North Carolina and talked to people in the furniture and textile industry who have an interest in international trade. I came back and wrote an article called "Hometown Foreign Policy," how people in towns around the United States think about foreign policy issues. If they do, where they get their information, and what the Department can do to improve things. My key thesis was, let's stop talking to the American people in the language of the Foreign Service. Let's talk to them in terms of things that mean something to their everyday lives - not just trade, but the contacts that they have internationally that they don't know about, and that they have a variety of international interests that can be offsetting, as I found in Pittsburgh. You'd have people working in a bank who had a cousin or a brother or something who was laid off from a steel company and they turned out to be non-free trade, non-NAFTA people, but if you pointed out to them that the financial services industry for which they worked in Pittsburgh depends heavily on global economic ties, that's another way to get at them. So, I did that.

After that, I was then interested in going to the Bureau of Public Affairs to put into practice some of these ideas I built up. I remember having an interview with the guy who was Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Bernie Calb. I understood that I was on track to be his deputy. Then I talked to some senior Foreign Service people who had been my mentors, people whose careers and judgement I respected. I remember, Jim Spain told me, "Look, that can be interesting, but it's not really the major business of diplomacy." As a result, I took my name out of the running for the Deputy Secretary for Public Affairs slot. Ron Spiers said, "I'm going on leave, but you're on my list to get something." Nothing was coming out. Then I got a call from Jim Bishop, one of Crocker's deputies, asking would I take the job of AF/W director? That's the last thing I wanted. I had spent a lot of time in Africa, especially West Africa. I wasn't at all interested in that. But it was back doing the real work of diplomacy and there was nothing else that was a bird in the hand, so I took it.

Q: You were in AF/W from when to when?

WALKER: About late '85 to about '87 or '88.

Q: A good solid time.

WALKER: Yes, two years. I left Togo in '84. I did the Una chapman Cox thing until early '85. That was an interesting time in a number of ways. In AF/W, I felt underemployed. It had a lot of countries but they really didn't... There were some interesting things to do on Liberia. In African terms, we had some important interests there, strategic ones and some American commercial interests and, of course, a lot of American citizen interest and some African-American interests. AF/W Nigeria and working on that problem. But I really never felt my heart was in that job. During that period, I saw how the politics of getting ambassadorships works. The State Department put me forward all the way through the deputy's committee for a number of ambassadorships: Nepal, Malta, Luxembourg, Jamaica, and one other somewhere. I wound up being defeated by the White House, the White House choosing in one case a used car salesman from California who was a big contributor; the second case, the First Lady's podiatrist; a political appointee who was an alcoholic but didn't want to leave and didn't leave; there were some others. I saw the way that that worked, but kept the faith.

Q: West Africa... I've just finished talking to Keith Wauchope, who was dealing with this at about the same time.

WALKER: He was my deputy.

Q: He was saying that during this time it was split between the Francophone, where not a lot was happening, and the Anglophone, where Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia, particularly Liberia, caused a lot of problems.

WALKER: When I was there, we had both Anglophone and Francophone. Keith was my deputy for Francophone. I had another deputy for Nigeria. I've forgotten how the other English speaking - Ghana and Sierra Leone and Liberia - are split up. I didn't see that as a difference in management. Later, they did divide it more explicitly than that. But AF/W has had a parade of some very good officers. They did a lot of good work in carrying forward the grunt work of American diplomacy in a part of the world that has not a great deal of American interests but for some important reasons we had to continue to pursue a diplomacy where we made friends and kept relations going. People have done that very well there. It's also good training ground for desk officers. They get a lot of responsibility. We had 17 countries, more than any other country directorate in the Department, things to keep up with.

Q: Were there any situations that you had to deal with specifically?

WALKER: Yes. One of them was Liberia - one Samuel Doe, another of the tyrants that I have dealt with.

Q: He was a corporal, wasn't he?

WALKER: I don't remember, sergeant I think. He was of very low rank. How do you handle someone who is not only not handling the economic affairs of the country very well - there were some American interests in Firestone and with iron ore and so on. Also, we had some more strategic interests in the Omiga navigation system there. How do you handle this against this guy's abysmal handling of the economy and his horrible human rights record in which he was jailing people who had very good friends in our country? I remember one lady - Ellen Johnson Sirleaf - who had been senior in the World Bank and with one of our commercial banks as well. How do you manage that problem... There were a number of things I had to do, all ranging from testifying to the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa about this. The chairman at the time, Howard Wolpe, was someone whom I had met earlier and got to know in South Africa. He came out and visited other places where I had been, both in Tanzania and South Africa, and we developed a personal friendship. But I had to get up there and explain - it was my responsibility and rightly so - U.S. policy of trying to balance all of these different things. That was a difficult thing to do when you've got four congressional committees that have a number of agendas - one is to find out the facts and to understand or propose different analyses, but others are to serve other constituencies. That was a difficult thing. I remember when I had to go out and see Doe and talk to him about his behavior. When I walked in this guy's office - and he was nervous as hell; you could see it... I'm sure this was the first timhe had encountered a "Washington Dip"- and I'm sure the embassy had built me up as a very senior State Department person coming out... He had obviously decided he was going to put on his best garb, digs. Here was this guy sitting in his office with, I kid you not, snake skin boots and a Rolex studded with diamonds all around it. If there was any way to turn off an American State Department official coming out, it's that. But armed with my knowledge of how an American diplomat deals with tyrants, as I knew both in Togo and of another kind in South Africa and other places, I decided I'd try to constructively engage this guy to try to bring him around. And we were able to do some things both in terms of releasing some people he had detained and in promising to move in certain directions towards a giving scope to the opposition.

Do you want to hear another story?

Q: I'd love to!

WALKER: Another one was when they decided they'd better escalate this a bit. Doe even won an election - I can't believe that, but he was going to be reinstalled in his position. So, we had to send out a delegation. We didn't want to make it too high, so we decided to send out the Inspector General of the Foreign Service. We knew Doe didn't know what this meant, but it sounded impressive. That was Bill Harrop. So Bill and I went out on the delegation. I got a message from the embassy that Doe for this swearing in wondered if I could bring out a bulletproof vest for him. So, I found the appropriate place in the U.S. government that might supply a bulletproof vest and took this out to him and he wore it. The swearing in ceremony was in a church somewhere. Bill Harrop and I were sitting in there. I looked at Doe and could tell he had this vest on. Then I heard this crackling sound and lights flashing. I just slid way down in my seat saying, "Well, I see why he wanted that vest." It turned out there was a short circuit in a lamp in the ceiling that had gone off. On an earlier occasion, I had gone out and told the embassy that we wanted to see some of the political detainees, including Mrs. Johnson Shirleapf, as a signal that we wanted to try to bring the government along to change while protecting our other interests. I remember going out and the embassy had not made arrangements for us to see oppositionalists. They made arrangements for us to go into the place where they were being detained, but not to see Ms. Johnson Shirleapf. I couldn't understand the failure of the embassy to make these arrangements. The minister of justice was there, who I had met earlier and developed some sort of rapport with. I said, "I can't leave here without seeing some of these detainees, particularly this notable woman." They brought her out. It was a very moving thing. She was so grateful and was crying and so on. But these are some of the incremental things you can do to move things along.

Q: What happened to her?

WALKER: I don't know. Ultimately, she got out after Doe. I think she was a member of the government. This was after my time. Whether she came back and was working for the Bank back here or not, I don't know.

Q: How about Nigeria? This was the really big country in your area, wasn't it?

WALKER: Yes.

Q: How were relations during this time?

WALKER: I was by that time an old Nigeria hand, having been political officer in Lagos, and consul in Kaduna in the north and desk officer in Washington. Nigeria was a big disappointment in the sense of all that tremendous potential ruined by a series of coups and corruption. We were fortunate in having very good ambassadors out there, including during my watch at AF/W, one of whom, Tom Smith, was a predecessor of mine as AF/W director. Then another one was Princeton Lyman, who I had known as one of the deputies to Crocker. I had known him going back to my days in South Africa in briefings in the Department in the Africa Bureau. They were both very good. One of the things you look at as a country director is not only the conduct of policy but the management of an embassy. That was a big embassy. I went out and toured several times my parish, including Nigeria. One of the things I looked at very closely was the management of those places. You got to appreciate the role of a good DCM in doing that. As for policy issues, they were not very complicated. How do you in a country that's run by a military junta try to bring about the kinds of political and economic changes that are good for a number of reasons - political stability in that country, and is for human rights reasons. There is not a great deal that you can do new in that situation. You just try to push the envelope as far as you can and that's what we were doing.

Q: I would think that Chet Crocker as the Assistant Secretary was almost full-time on the southern African situation, so each of you running these other places were not on your own, but this was not a prime concern to the upper echelon.

WALKER: Yes and no. In general terms, you're right. Chet certainly was spending most of his time on southern Africa, which was not only South Africa and Namibia but Angola, which had a wider canvas in terms of some of our global interests and relationships during what was still then the Cold War. Chet turned a lot of the West Africa over to the deputy whose portfolio includes West Africa and Central Africa. At that time, it was Jim Bishop, who had been in that job and previously AF/DV for a long time. When Jim and I first knew each other, we both were desk officers in AF/W back in the '70s. So, Jim had an encyclopedic knowledge of things and personalities in West Africa, both Francophone and Anglophone. He was very helpful to Chet in that way. But if I had 17 countries, Jim as the Deputy Assistant Secretary must have had 20-some. There were times when Jim got more involved in the management of things than I thought was necessary or desirable, but at least he knew the terrain.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover about this time?

WALKER: I'd like to say one other thing. There is another responsibility senior Foreign Service officers have. Certainly ambassadors have it, but others have it - deputy chiefs of mission, section chiefs, and certainly back in the Department for someone like the country director. That is the professional development of subordinates. That is something that most of us don't pay enough attention to, but you have opportunities for that when you're back in the Department and you have desk officers who are not sure about things, maybe they've got one or two assignments under their wing. Looking back, I wish I had spent more time on that in AF/W. I spent the most time with people who were either outstanding or who had problems, counseling them, talking to them, trying to bring them along. But, if I had it to do all over again, I would have left more of the policy and management things to my own subordinates or to the field and spent a little more time myself on personal development of the younger officers.

Q: This is probably a good time to stop.

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Today is August 30, 2002. The Inspection Corps. When did you start there?

WALKER: I started that in either late '87 or '88. How I got into it... When I was in AF/W, the Department was trying very hard to get me another embassy. They had sent my name to the White House on several occasions. I got beat out by political appointees on all of those or the White House decision to let the political appointees stay on. As a result, I was asked by Management to go over and spend a short period of time in the Bureau of Examiners examining candidates for the Foreign Service. I stayed there about a month.

Q: What was your impression of that process?

WALKER: By the time we saw the people for oral examinations, the written examination was meant to have brought us only the cream of the crop. I was never sure that was always the case. We got some very top people in the oral interviews. But we also got some people who in terms of their academics were articulate and knowledgeable but I had questions about their ability to move very far in the Foreign Service and be very effective in it. Why? For a couple of reasons. One, some of them didn't come across to me as operationally savvy, managerially savvy, and with an ability to be good team members or to be good leaders who motivate the best performance in their subordinates, who spend very much time with them. That's difficult to tell in an interview. I wasn't sure at that time, nor am I now, that the written examination didn't miss some people with these important other traits and attributes as opposed to being very good on the facts of U.S. history or world history or world affairs or economics.

Q: After about a month, you went into the Inspection Corps?

WALKER: I did. They were still trying to get the White House to approve the State Department's nominee - me to some countries. As that continued to not happen, I was asked if I would just go and spend a short period in the Inspection Corps until they could make it happen. It turned out to be a little longer than any of us had expected. It was about 14 months. But that was one of the best assignments I had in the Foreign Service. Why? One, I got to see the conduct of American foreign policy, the formulation of American foreign policy, and the management of embassies on a range of levels, embassies, U.S. interests, and managerial complexity that I had not seen in my own direct experience, in my own assignments, particularly in all parts of the world. I led inspection teams to Japan, France, Italy, Mexico, Hong Kong, Cuba, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Zambia. So, I had a breadth of exposure to these aspects of the Foreign Service and of the formulation and conduct of American foreign policy that I didn't know firsthand from my own experience. That was valuable to get an appreciation of the kinds of issues that the State Department deals with. The other way that it was particularly valuable to me was appreciating the better methods of management of a diplomatic mission - management of resources, people, money, other assets and getting the most out of people. We don't spend enough time in the Foreign Service on developing good managers at the senior level. We try to do that. I went to the DCM seminar and that was what that was meant to do. But that tour I had on the Inspection Corps taught me more about good management than I had known before. And it paid off in my later assignment as ambassador to Madagascar, where I applied some of the lessons I had learned in the Inspection Corps on how good managers manage well and how bad managers manage not well. Consequently, my management of our embassy in Madagascar was said by the Department to be one of the 5 best in the world.

Q: You went to some of the top embassies - Japan, France, Italy, Mexico... At that time, would you rate any as being particularly poorly managed or having poor morale and ones who were particularly good and effective?

WALKER: Yes. We saw some bad management from the ambassador's suite all the way down to section heads. Invariably, a theme of that began at the top of the embassy or the top of the section - whether or not those leaders felt people and managing people and effectively managing resources were important parts of their jobs. Those who did not tended to fall into two categories. One, many of the political appointees - you would think that these are the people who, like their supporters say, come in because they have experience in the private sector in leadership and management of people and resources. Many of them do very well. But I saw many who were lousy managers. One wonders how they showed a profit in their own private sector activities. They were lousy managers in terms of relating to people, motivating people, and getting out, managing by walking around, and knowing what's going on in the management of resources. As for Foreign Service chiefs of mission and heads of section, they in many cases did not have an appreciation of that aspect of their responsibilities, some of them because they saw themselves as superpolitical officers or supereconomic officers and it was their job to come up with brilliant analyses and policy recommendations rather than to manage people. That's a notion that many in our profession who go to the top have. So we found that as well.

Q: When you were in Mexico, who was the ambassador?

WALKER: I don't recall.

Q: How about Hong Kong? Were you seeing it as a consulate general that was searching for a role with the opening of Beijing? Hong Kong was sort of the China watch place? Did you see a change there?

WALKER: With the opening of the embassy, as the embassy got better staffed and more resources, it could do more. Before then, the consulate general in Hong Kong was very important for China watching. When we were there, we saw it still performing an important reporting function in South China, particularly down in the industrializing parts of Shanghai and others. The embassy did not have the resources yet, nor did it have the writ from the Chinese government to do that kind of reporting and representation all over. My recollection is that we found the consulate general in Hong Kong playing a useful role.

Q: By the time you were doing inspections, the inspection thing had changed from the days when inspectors went out and were sort of considered to be particularly important for giving help and assistance in... There had been more of an emphasis lately on finding waste, fraud, and inefficiency and not so much a friendly hand out there to help you along. Did you see a change?

WALKER: No, I didn't. I was on the receiving end of inspections before I went to the Inspection Corps and was on the receiving end afterwards. I think it depends on the inspection team leader and the quality of people on the inspection team. When I was there, it was the first time we had a non-Foreign Service officer as Inspector General: Sherman Funk from the Commerce Department. I think Sherman came with the notion of a mandate to bear down on looking at waste, fraud, and mismanagement. I don't think that was anything knew. I think he thought the emphasis he was putting on it was new, but any Foreign Service officer who doesn't believe that waste, fraud, and mismanagement cripples the State Department both internally and in its relations in Washington needs to look again. I dinot feel that our non-Foreign Service officer Inspector General with whom I worked at that time was in any way disinclined to accept the notion that we were also looking at policy implementation, the effectiveness of it, and the coordination of policy both within a mission and between a mission and its higher authority, whether that was a consulate with the embassy or the embassy with Washington. I also didn't have any kind of impression that Sherman did not feel that we were out to help. He did not see us as "gotcha" players. My team - I was determined, and I think members of my team were determined, that we were out there to improve the performance of the embassy rather than simply to grade it. We spent a lot of our time not only pointing out to them in our interviews and our final reports what they could do better, but how they could do it better. I think inspection teams seeing things done in different ways can make recommendations on what works better at other places.

Q: Did you have any feeling about the effectiveness of your reports? Particularly when they pertained to some of these embassies which are run by political appointees, were they responsive to suggestions?

WALKER: They had to respond to our report. They sent in their responses. One of the vulnerabilities of the inspection system is that the inspection team that went out there is not around to do a follow-up. There is a system for follow-up inspections to test whether or not there had been compliance, but these are done by different people. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but they are done increasingly now with a longer gap so that the same people aren't there and you have to depend on new people to have read the old inspection report and the compliance report and take it seriously.

Q: After about 14 months of this, what happened?

WALKER: I remember exactly what happened. I was inspecting our U.S. Interests Section in Cuba, which was very interesting.

Q: Let's talk about Cuba. What was the situation there and how did we operate?

WALKER: I went down there and found this huge U.S. Interests Section. Theoretically, we were an Interests Section in the Swiss embassy. But our Interests Section must have been three, four, five times the size of the Swiss embassy. We had a separate building. It was run by the head of the Interests Section, who happened to be the guy who was political counselor when I was DCM in South Africa, Jay Taylor, a fine officer, a very intelligent guy, very people oriented in terms of management of people, and an intellectually curious and courageous person. Those two traits put him at odds with some other people in the Bureau of Latin American Affairs as far as our Cuba policy is concerned. We looked at that issue. We also looked at the issue of management of an organization that large which had the anomaly of being a U.S. Interests Section. There were some differences of the kind I've just suggested between our head of the Interests Section and the Bureau of Latin American Affairs and others within that bureau. There were some differences with other organizations represented in the U.S. Interests Section.

Q: The differences being basically what?

WALKER: Basically, assessing the direction of the Castro regime in 1989, I was down there - whether or not it was making any basic changes in what was beginning to be the post-Cold War era which would make us reassess our policy toward's Castro's Cuba. Jay saw that glass a little more than half full, more than some people back in the Department in his bureau and than some people within his own organization in Havana, particularly the Agency representative and maybe one or two others. It was also a question of how closely he kept a tight enough reign on some other people who perhaps felt that the day had come for more initiatives and free wheeling in Cuba. There was one person in the USIA operation...

Q: Did you feel that our whole attitude was dominated by American political considerations, the Cuban exiles in Florida?

WALKER: It was. Our position on Cuba at that time, as it is now, was the consequence of a number of factors. One is the one you mentioned, the domestic political dimension of the Cuban lobby. Another was the personal and sometimes almost ideological proclivities of some of the people in the Department and the NSC and the White House at the time, but also the personal and ideological proclivities of people on the other side within our own system, like that of Jay Taylor. All of these went into the mix. The question for us was, how do you manage dissenting views in a way that is both creative and orderly for the conduct of American policy.

Q: Looking back on it, Cuba probably has as loud people... People can come at Cuba from every side. A lot of it's personal. They get very ideological, some very practical... These things all clash.

WALKER: You asked where I went from the Inspection Corps- (end of tape)

The day after I left Havana and went back to Mexico City to wind up that inspection - I had to go out to one of the consulates to look at something - I got this NODIS cable from Havana, from Jay Taylor, saying, "I need to pass on to you a communication we got from Washington." The gist of it was, would you accept if you were offered the ambassadorship to South Africa? I said, "Yes." Then, "Would you give us a call?" I called and got Bill Swing, who was the Deputy Director General. He said, "Yes, that's what it was. The Department was trying to decide who they were going to send as its nominee over to the White House." My name was on the list and if I was selected, would I go? I said, "Yes." I came back to Washington. That ended my tour in the Inspection Corps. Later, the name selected was not mine. It was Bill Swing's whose name went over to the White House and was ultimately approved. He went out. In fact, Bill and I and Ray Ewing, who was going out as ambassador to Ghana, had our hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee jointly. I got the State Department's nod to go to Madagascar. I accepted that and spent the next couple of months reading in on Madagascar and getting my briefings and going out there.

I might say something here about my departure for Madagascar, which is an interesting little vignette on President Bush (the elder). Normally ambassadors get invited over to the White House to have a photo opportunity with the President before they go out. That is a useful thing. That photograph in your office at the embassy gives the impression of what good personal relations you have with the President, and you like to have your host country officials and other nationals see that. President Bush did that, but he did something else. He did something different. He invited over about six of us newly outgoing ambassadors to the White House not for a photo opportunity in the Oval Office - we had that at another occasion separately - but invited us up to the private quarters upstairs in a very personal way. That was a really splendid touch. We got some photos out of that, not only the photos in the private quarters with the President and the First Lady and that was very useful in representation, but it was something to our ego, but you had a sense of this being a President you're proud to represent, he had that touch. It made me proud to represent this President not only because he had that kind of personal touch, which encouraged you to have that kind of personal touch with your own people, but also because he invited each of us out onto the veranda upstairs overlooking the South Lawn for our five minute private chat. I was just amazed at how much this man knew about Madagascar. We talked about it. He said he remembered when he was over visiting President Mitterrand in Paris at some sort of occasion and some of the chiefs of state of Francophone countries came. Mitterrand said, "I want to introduce you to Ratsiraka of Madagascar" and he told him something about his ideological movement from left to center. I was very impressed by what President Bush knew without a 3x5 card on these matters.

Anyhow, I finished my briefings in Washington and went off to Madagascar. Our son and daughter, Greg and Wendy, were at university by this time. I'm terribly proud of my children and my wife for how they were able to be very creative in the use of their time in some of these hardship posts we were in. I said at my retirement ceremony that I hoped I could be as creative with the use of my spare time in retirement as my wife had been throughout our career. But the children in these posts had to adapt to a different culture and education system and so on. They were with us through our postings in Jordan. When we were leaving Jordan to go to Tanzania, it was the first place we had been where there wasn't adequate schooling for one of my children, my son. He would have to go off to boarding school. That was much more difficult for my wife and for me, it turned out, than it was for him. But I'm very proud of his adjustment as the first in the family to go away to boarding school.

Q: Where did he go?

WALKER: He went off to Northfield - Mount Herman in Massachusetts. We took him up there. We fortunately were back to do that. It was a heartwrenching moment for all of us, leaving there. In terms of education, he was always a very bright guy, but we found that the education that he had received in math and science in Jordan, where he got all As, did not stand him in that good a stead. So, he had to really do some buckling down. He was all alone at that time. That was a very difficult time. But his character came through. He didn't get all As and Bs during that time and that was a difficult adjustment. Part of what helped for him and for our daughter's decision to go off to boarding school the next year was when Greg came out at Christmas to visit us in Dar Es Salaam. He came out through London and was bumped from the flight from London to Dar Es Salaam. I was furious. I told British Airways, "Go find my son!" They found him and did very well by him. They put him up at a first-rate hotel in Piccadilly Circus and brought him out the next day and gave him 100 pounds to spend, which he used to buy a new bike. So that did it for our daughter, Wendy, "I'm going to boarding school. I want to get bumped and get a bike." But, she had a difficult time in Tanzania that year on her own, going to the American School. The following year she went off to boarding school. She went to the same place.

Back to Madagascar. We left them here in school and went out to Antananarivo. The drive in from the airport shocked my wife, the poverty there. I had the benefit of briefings and we had been in poor places. We had been in Lagos, Lome, and Dar Es Salaam. But she was rather shocked by the poverty we saw there. But we got to the residence, which was quite nice. I immediately got very busy at the embassy. There was a lot to do, and it was very interesting to me and soon became interesting to my wife as well. Madagascar is an interesting place. All of the places we've served are interesting. But the people are the most interesting. I found out that there are more members of the French Academy from Madagascar than any other place in France d'Outre Mer. They are a very clever and talented people in literature, the sciences, music, dance... Madagascar was France's jewel in the Indian Ocean before independence. I'm told that into the '50s, the fashions that came out in Paris were in the boutiques of Antananarivo within two weeks. I found the work very interesting. What were our interests? Like in most places in the Africa Bureau, not frontburner, but we had some things of interest professionally there.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WALKER: I was there from mid-'89 to '92. The interests were... The soviets at that time, believe it or not, still were trying to use that as a listening post against us. They had some high intelligence collection on us there. Someone must have missed a promotion in the Soviet Union because there was nothing really that interesting to get there. But also because of some interests we were developing in the Southwest Indian Ocean and in Southern African places. For us, there was also a test case of whether or not we could turn around a leader like Ratsiraka, who had been a strong socialist in development policy and leftist in foreign policy, and whether one could change that not only for the benefit of Madagascar but as another model for other countries in similar situations. It was interesting for me to try to do that with Ratsiraka in establishing a personal relationship with him. That was a fascinating relationship. He is a very smart guy. He graduated first in his class at the French naval academy, an achievement for which I think the French have never forgiven him. He is very smart, very bright, intellectually agile, articulate, and appreciated a chance to have a give and take and a banter on a one on one basis with the American Ambassador or anyone else in discussing not only questions of bilateral relations but supply side economics. This guy had read Milton Friedman. Out economic discussions were about Madagascar's compliance with some of the conditionalities of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and some of the economic reforms that we were encouraging for Madagascar's economic growth... So, I found that a very interesting part of my assignment there.

Q: What was Ratsiraka's hold on power? How did he gain power and how did he run the country?

WALKER: He gained power a decade or so earlier in an election. He was a nationalist and a leftist nationalist replacing an establishment, French-friendly regime. He then came back and won an election again on that basis. His basis of power was not the military. It was not a power dictatorship during my period of time - as was the case in Togo, for example, by contrast. But it was a well-developed political organization, which was based on a number of things - one, its organization, but also because it had developed support among people in the coastal areas. As different from many other places in Africa as Madagascar is in many ways, it still shares with it, as it does with a number of societies around the world, a fragmented group consciousness. In Madagascar, that's not so much tribal as it is highland versus lowland coastal areas, which corresponds with some ethnic differences. The Merne, people in the highland area who came initially from Indonesia in the 7th century, have somewhat intermarried with the coastal people, who are a mixture of Africans and Arabs and Greeks and Persians and the rest. So, he held that kind of power. During my stay, towards the end, some opposition grew based on a number of things - part of it, these group differences; part of it, criticism of the ineffectiveness of the socialist economic policies of the Ratsiraka government, which were beginning to change toward a market economy, but not fast enough - they weren't effective. The opposition, in addition to having this group appeal to highlanders, although some opposition leaders were from the coast, developed into a popular movement called the Force Vivre: the popular movement of people who were a combination of some intellectuals and middle class, but also some very poor people, opposing the ineffectiveness of the economic policies of this very poor country. It combined with the other things you find in the political mix of the politics in any country, and combined with the group politics that I mentioned earlier, but also the personal ambitions of some people who had once known power and now were out and wanted back in - some of the people who were opposing Ratsiraka 10-15 years ago and lost. Curiously enough, some of that same mix earlier this year in the disturbances that one read about in Madagascar. Let me say that Ratsiraka's power was not based on military force but force was applied at some loss of life and injury during this Force Vivre conflict. When the Force Vivre assembled a huge number of people in demonstrations and they marched on the president's compound, they began to charge the compound, and some people were killed. There are mixed indications of whether or not it was at his order. He certainly directed that they protect the safety of his officials, himself included. There is one report that he may have said, "Fire at their legs." But in any event, some people were killed.

Q: Were there any particular issues when you went out there or while you were there that you dealt with? Did the Gulf War change the relationship?

WALKER: Those are some interesting stories. The Gulf War... We, like every American embassy around the world, had to explain our position to the government and seek its support, and we did that with some measure of success. We had a number of successes in that regard. One of the things we did a little later in the Gulf War when the refugees in the north of Iraq were having some real problems with fleeing the Saddam forces and with surviving - this was during the winter - I suggested to Ratsiraka, "You make good blankets here. Why don't you offer blankets to these people and make a statement of some kind that their human rights conditions should be respected." He did that. But there were some other aspects of the Gulf War. For example, our personal security concerns increased. I was a target, we knew from intelligence sources. I was very impressed that the Department sent out a special team to help us enhance our security and our evacuation, including the equivalent of a swat team to know where the evacuation helicopter would land and where to position sharpshooters in the trees of the residence gardens, to instruct my driver on evasive measures. I began to take certain evasion procedures there. So I was very impressed with the support in those kinds of matters. Not overbearing.

Let me mention something else in regard to Washington's support for security matters. During this period that I was discussing a moment ago when things heated up between the Ratsiraka's government and the Force Vivre opposition, there were demonstrations in the town, there was conflict between the opposition and the government, it was building up towards more of a physical confrontation to the point where Washington had us consider evacuation. It reached a point where we had various stages of evacuation, where it was voluntary for dependents... I never had to order any people to leave, but those who did leave, we had to tell them they couldn't come back until a certain time. That then brought up all the kinds of problems an embassy runs into of how do you run on less than full staff when people are evacuated? How do you maintain the morale of those who are still there without dependents, not so say one's own? Then meeting with the American community. I had to meet after with the expatriate American community - there were missionaries, not many businesspeople - give them briefings on development, set up an evacuation mechanism, radio communications. We got very good support from the Department and from neighboring embassies when we thought that we might have a big influx of people coming in to help with the possibility of a large-scale evacuation. There is no way out of that island other than by sea or air. So, we had offers from our counterparts at our American embassy in Mauritius and in South Africa to send over some consular help to do that. I was very impressed by that kind of cooperation. We liaised very closely with the French in terms of arranging - because they had a much larger expatriate community than we did - if we had to evacuate by air, how we would do it. We liaised with CINCPAC, the American commander in chief in the pacific, whose area of responsibility went as far west as Madagascar. So that was an interesting process to participate in.

Q: How did you find the political structure in Madagascar? Did you go to the president? Were you able to monitor the political temperature?

WALKER: Yes, we were. It's always important in a country where one person is so powerful for the ambassador to have good access to that person. The double edge of that sword is not to do so in a way that you close off access to opposition. I think we pulled that off not only in my own contacts but the contacts of other people in the embassy elsewhere within the government, with opposition figures, or among students, the media, and intellectuals at the university... We did that fairly well. At my own level, part of the trick was to try to pick who the next leadership would be. We happened to pick right, the person who was the mayor of Antananarivo, at the time with whom I had developed a personal relationship. He would come to my residence for drinks and we would chat B not only the mayor, but other people as well. As it happened, people within Ratsiraka's own inner circle who I felt could give him some sensible advice on how to deal not only with the economy but with the changing political situation, I had very good relations with them. One guy in particular had been the minister of finance at one time who had become a major figure in the ruling political party. But I referred earlier to my relationship with the mayor of Antananarivo. An interesting thing happened with regard to that. Both my relationship with him and my relationship with Ratsiraka, with whom I was over two years having these personal meetings and actually graduate seminars in economics and political science - and it wasn't a one way conversation; it was one that we both enjoyed. I developed that kind of personal relationship, and I like to think, respect on his part, so that during political crisis when we would talk, one of the points I was getting across is, "You really should preempt the criticism of the resulting change, acknowledging that you made some mistakes as a socialist, and you won't be alone because all the world is acknowledging that - the Russians, the Europeans, everyone else is acknowledging that you have to look more to market economics and open societies that go with that. You want to lead that movement instead of be dragged along by it." We got some mileage in that. He asked me one day, "Who would you suggest as my prime minister?" The president asking the American ambassador that. For reasons that I thought were very good for Madagascar, not to say the United States, I suggested the mayor of Antananarivo. He was appointed. So I had good access not only to the president but with the mayor, which paid off later when he became Prime Minister. When the mayor was, as now, prime minister, was organizing his cabinet, he called me over there to see him. As I was waiting outside in my car, up pulled a Malagasy whom I had known as an intellectual and head of their intellectual organization that spanned science, literature, and everything else.

Q: Like the Academy.WALKER: That's right. So we were both waiting to go in. We said, "Why don't we sit in the car together and chat?" I said, "I bet you've been called to be foreign minister." He said, "Oh, no, I wouldn't get that." Sure enough, the next day, he was appointed foreign minister, which helped my access to the new foreign minister as well. It was about a week or so later. I had gone in to see the new prime minister on an issue that I was asked by Washington to see him on. That had to do with a vote that was coming up in the UN in which we were trying to get the UN to reverse its resolution of a decade or so before branding Zionism as a form of racism. Our point was that, aside from the merits of that case, it certainly didn't help negotiating the peace process in the Middle East. I explained this to the prime minister. I was leaving his office. I was in my car. He came running out and said, "Ambassador, come back. I want to see you again." He was meeting with his new foreign service team - this new foreign minister and the equivalent of his NSC chairman and so on. He said, "We are discussing this issue of what position we should take on this UN Resolution. I would like you to speak to them as you spoke to me on this issue." I did. They debated among themselves for a while. I made my case and just sat there and listened. It was an unbelievable experience. You often would like to be a fly on the wall when things like that are happening. Here I was sitting and listening to this government's inner cabinet make its decision and was given a chance to put an oar in the water. As it turned out, they reversed Madagascar's earlier position and voted as we wanted, against the old resolution. Madagascar was one of the supporters of the resolution earlier branding Zionism as racism and they voted against it. It was another case where contacts pay off. I do a course now that I am retired at a number of universities on diplomacy. One of the points we look at is, are embassies any longer necessary in this day of rapid communication and transportation? One of the points I make is that the day to day contacts build up not only an ability to better assess the situation but also to represent your government's position. Those were some of the highlights of my time in Madagascar. There are some others we could talk about.

One was this curious personality of Ratsiraka. He was a very bright guy. In my own experience, he was among the top three intellectually with whom I dealt. The first was Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. During my period as charge there, I got to have similar kinds of conversations with him. He had a first-class mind. The other was the foreign minister in South Africa, Pik Botha. There were a number of aspects to his personality. Don't we all? One of them was his showmanship - I began to understand when I learned that at university he had been drum major of the college band. But he also was a quick and sharp mind. But getting back to Ratsiraka, some of the conversations I had with him on economics, on social and political organization, on world affairs, he loved to talk about these things. He obviously was a man who felt that he was on a smaller stage than he was capable of. So we had interesting conversations on those broad issues. But sometimes he would go way off and get really quite flaky. I wondered what he was smoking. I had no indication that he really ever was. I just say that as a way of speech. We were talking once about the Middle East and he went into this long monologue about how the tribes of Israel centuries ago came down to Madagascar and he had researched this personally and found by tracing gemstones that he could trace how they had gone, how those ancient Israelis had gotten back to other places where the Israeli tribes were. I sat there and listened to that. I had nothing to add to it.

Q: Something like the lost tent tribes of Israel?

WALKER: Yes, and how they went to Madagascar and then over the litoral of the Indian Ocean and so on. I just sat there amazed and looked at him. Is this the guy with whom I have these rational discussions on Keynesian economics and so on? I couldn't explain it.

Let me mention another thing. I mentioned this to Secretary Eagleburger when I came back on my end of tour debriefing. Eagleburger at that time was Acting Secretary or still Deputy Secretary. But one of the problems I had as ambassador in Madagascar was, how do you deal with dissent within your own embassy on the question of human rights and how do you deal with people on a hobby horse on this issue back in the Department? The question of human rights for me came up when this Force Vivre dissidence was growing. My initial assessment to Washington was, "This growing opposition group is something we want to watch, but we don't have a big dog in that fight. We have some others here. Watch it for a number of reasons. There are things we should say and do to show that we are on the side of reform and human rights." Some of the things that I was doing privately along those lines with the president I couldn't talk about, we couldn't use that publicly, but we could do things like, for example, meet with members of the Force Vivre at an appropriate level. This was generally at the level of my political officer, but eventually I met privately with the leader of this group. We decided to give them some computers for their offices. The president didn't like that, but we did it. But I had always to manage my political officer who was a junior officer - this was her first assignment abroad - and to encourage her to make these contacts but also to keep in mind the larger political picture in doing this and in her reporting, to send back to Washington accurately what the opposition was saying but to make some kind of evaluation of whether or not these were valid points or how widespread they were and so on. That was always a difficult thing I had to do. I could manage that within my own embassy. But the more difficult thing was the Madagascar desk officer in the Department of State who also - I don't think she had had but one or two foreign assignments - who was pushing us to do more and more on the human rights side and open criticism of government and support of this opposition in a way that I thought was unbalanced in terms of the full range of our interests there and in what was practicably doable in a constructive engagement way for bringing about change. I was never certain that I could get my desk officer supervisor, the country director, or his supervisor, the Deputy Assistant Secretary, to fully understand what this was. In fact, I became convinced I was unable to do it. The country director came out on his tour of a number of countries and came to Madagascar as well. I just had this vibe that this person came out there to find out why Walker wasn't getting the message in terms of prioritizing this human rights issue. I never felt that we had the same wavelength exchange on this, that the embassy and the country directorate and the desk had this. I was convinced of that when the country director came out. I was not convinced that this person had a balanced view, that it wasn't a preconceived view. In any event, we got him to meet all of the people, including opposition leaders, who he wanted to meet with one exception, which gets to a point of diplomatic conduct in places like Madagascar. This person wanted to see the president. My question was, why? It was a question that had a number of dimensions, not the least of which was the pride of the president. He is president. He is a very intelligent guy. He could well raise the question, "I can't even get my ambassador to see your Assistant Secretary. Why should you send a desk officer or a country director in to see the president?" This is something that you expect professional diplomats back in Washington to understand. Now, I understand that to the extent that Washington has an issue in Washington with human rights, that's one aspect of foreign policy and the constituency of foreign policy that must be accommodated, and people in the field, like myself, have to understand that. But at the same time, there are other aspects of foreign policy. If we want to get certain U.S. interests achieved or served, we've got to take them into account and to manage it. I was not convinced that I had a Foreign Service officer who came out to visit me as country director that lacked that professional balance and that professional judgement. My other bigger concern in this context was that there are so many ways in which an ambassador's access to and communication with and policy input at the sixth floor level and above - that is, the Assistant Secretary level and above - is limited bureaucratically and by people's time that I felt in this case my communication was being bottlenecked at the level of a desk officer because the higher levels have a bunch of higher items on their agenda than Madagascar. But on this issue of the balance between human rights and other U.S. interest concerns there, Washington was abdicating to this desk officer with very little field experience, not to say foreign policy experience, was abdicating the communication link with the ambassador and the ambassador's proposals and views. I took this point up with Larry Eagleburger when I came back. He smiled and said, "Tell me about it" and acknowledged it's a problem. It is a problem. It's a problem that won't go away. But it's a problem that everyone's going to have to have and manage, but it's a problem that managers in the field and managers back in Washington need to spend more time talking to each other about and those of us in the field have to talk with Washington about this before we go out to understand that Washington has constituency concerns in foreign policy that may not always be front burner or as apparent in the field, whereas Washington has to understand that the field knows a little bit about the tactics of the conduct of an agreed foreign policy set of objectives, and when there develops a difference on those, an ambassador must be heard at an appropriate level and that level should not be particularly at a desk officer level. So, this is a problem of the coordination of foreign policy that our State Department is not alone in foreign ministries in having to grapple with.

Q: So often, too, you have a generational thing - young people tend to be idealistic and singleminded. After a while, they learn the broader issues. In foreign policy, often if they get in or go running off and feel they're going to change the world.

WALKER: That is certainly true. The other side of that is that experienced Foreign Service officers sometimes get crusty and lose a sense of idealism. But even worse is, officers in the field can miss what's going on back at home and that certain kinds of issues may have increased in importance since they were back there. Or the state of bureaucratic play back in the Department or Washington as a whole may be such that requires some kind of adjustment in increase in importance on what we are talking about now, these idealistic matters, and the field has to take into account those changes back in Washington. How do we do that? We do that by trips back home from time to time to learn about the country. But you count on your backup. The first line of backup is the desk officer. You have to have confidence in that desk officer. If you don't have confidence in that desk officer, you have to look to your country director to bring in that level and you have to have a country director who understands this from both ends of the telescope and comes to grips with it. You also need a Deputy Assistant Secretary and an Assistant Secretary to help make that happen. These matters of the coordination of policy have to be given more thought in the Department and in embassies or in chiefs of mission conferences of how to make this coordination work more smoothly.

Q: In Madagascar, how did you find the French influence? I would imagine that you have the president looking to someone beyond the French and this must have set the French establishment off.

WALKER: Yes and no. How did I find the French? I found them French - on the one hand, smug, at times arrogant, and at times brutal. I'll come back to that in a moment. Ratsiraka knew the extent to which the French were influential in that country. He also was a Francophone, though he speaks English well. Most of our conversations one on one were in English. He is brilliant in the use of language. But he also had his contacts. Like many people in Africa, he was very close to Jacques Chirac and others in France. How did I get on with the French? Personally well, but the French were smug in a sense of still resenting that they were kicked out of that country, but still played a big role in terms of the levels of their aid and other kinds of assistance they did. Also, many of the Malagasy elite, even though some of them had some Anglo proclivities, all the way from their Protestantism to their language, saw that the British lost out in Madagascar or gave up, gave away, as they did, and that their own training had been in France. They were very Francophone themselves in not only their language but in some of their values and traits and behavior.

I said the French were smug, arrogant, and sometimes brutal. This came up in a particular conflict I had there on something I was pushing. That is, Madagascar was about to buy a new long distance aircraft for Air Madagascar. Would it be Boeing or Airbus? You know our position. We can't push any American product if there is an American competitor. We must give them both a chance. But if there's not, as in this case there wasn't, I decided one of my main responsibilities there was to get involved in this. I did it by not so much promoting Boeing myself but by providing occasion for Boeing to promote itself. How did I do this? The head of Air Madagascar's board of directors was the brother of the prime minister, who had been the mayor, who had been my good friend. I was able to arrange a private dinner in my residence one evening between the senior representative of Boeing, who came out from Paris, and this guy. It was just the three of us. Boeing was able to lay out its case to this person. It had a case not only in the merits of the aircraft but a number of other things in terms of servicing - I don't want to discuss what were the exact terms laid out-

Q: Spare parts, the whole thing.

WALKER: Parts, training, maybe Madagascar could have become a regional center for maintenance of Boeing aircraft, which were in a number of places around there. He talked about runway lengths and fuel consumption and a number of these things. But I provided occasion for him to make a very good case. What I did was also to make a very good case with the prime minister's new minister of transportation, who I had also cultivated out of power, not only on the tennis court but here is where other assets come out, cultivated through our wives and even children when they came out to visit. I presented Boeing's case there, what it had to offer. The Malagasy new government decided to buy Boeing. So much so that they put down a huge deposit for that aircraft. When the minister of transport told me that's what the decision was, that was one of the greatest cables I had ever written and we got kudos for that and all the rest of it. I must say, the story didn't end there. Not long after that, the minister of transport called me at home and said, "We've got a real problem." I went over to see him. I don't want to violate here confidentiality of those conversations, which I think may still be important to this minister there, but I learned that the French were putting on the pressure. In effect, and I won't say where I learned this, I learned it from reliable Malagasy contacts the French had threatened. I won't identify the contacts, and I'm not identifying the minister of transport in that case. Once they had learned about this back in Paris, where there were a number of interests in the sale of Airbus, some very personal and at a very high level. They, in effect, told the Malagasy authorities, "This is how much you get from us and how much the Americans give to you. This will be in jeopardy." I reported that. We had a smoking gun. I must say, to Larry Eagleburger's credit, they called in the French ambassador, but not before the Department of Commerce or a high level at the Treasury insisted that we call the French on this. I feel that it was this other department that really pushed State into confronting the French. But in the end, Larry called this guy in and read him the riot act, at which time the French ambassador here in Washington complained about Walker out in Madagascar. One of the things I had done, I was coming back on either R&R or consultations about this time and it was my idea to give a press interview before I left. I cleared this with Washington first. I said, "And I'm going to give them the questions to ask me." The questions had to do with... I made a number of points. One, it's up to Madagascar to decide what their decision on aircraft purchase would be, but they want into take into consideration a number of things. One, the cost effectiveness of that decision to Air Madagascar because I knew that the director and the key officials in Air Madagascar wanted that Boeing for their own professional reasons. Madagascar would have to take into account which was the best aircraft for them in terms of the cost effectiveness for Air Madagascar. It would want to take into account on a larger canvas whether or not the government of Madagascar made its decisions on economic grounds or political grounds and if the latter, what that would mean to potential foreign investors and economic partners. Finally, I said, "Madagascar and the U.S. have very good relations. We're good friends in a number of ways, not only economically" and then I listed off not only our levels of foreign assistance but our contributions to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, our percentage of that contribution, and if you add to our bilateral aid that percentage of what Madagascar gets from those international financial institutions, we are way up there, a big contributor to Madagascar. They printed that in the press. Apparently, the French ambassador and Paris were furious at this. The French ambassador in Washington mentioned to Eagleburger, "How dare your ambassador go public on this kind of thing!" To Larry's credit, he said, "We're going to give Walker a commendation for that. He's doing exactly what he is supposed to do." He didn't tell the French ambassador that I had cleared this first with Washington and gotten its approval for it. So we had a difficult time with the French on this commercial deal, but we weren't the only ones. My namesake, Lannon Walker, had a problem with them in Senegal as well, dealing with what kind of wheat - American or French - they should use and import to make baguettes.

Q: Was there the equivalent, as there is in Paris, of the intellectuals, the chattering class? Was this an influential group - not people in the government but the commentary?

WALKER: No, it wasn't influential. Madagascar didn't have that developed a civil society. They had a media which was more or less open. While I was there, it grew more open both in the printed media and television media. They were interesting for me to talk to, but, when I was there, I wouldn't call them politically influential and not all that widespread. It was just that they were very interesting people to talk to, not just about political issues and economic issues, but literature, music, all kinds of things.

Q: You were there during the dying days of the soviet Empire. Was that reflected in Madagascar?

WALKER: In many ways. First of all, that contributed, as it did all over the world, to the president's turn away from his youthful socialism to more market economy and in his foreign policy towards the United States. Ratsiraka was a guy that was responsible for kicking our NASA space station out of Madagascar. He was the guy who was largely responsible for voting against us in the UN in a number of ways. One of the things I set out as an objective when I first went out to Madagascar - and people in the Department said, "You're crazy. Don't set yourself these kind of objectives that are unattainable - I decided I was going to get the Peace Corps into Madagascar and we did it. That's one of the achievements I'm proud of. It's a great success there now. But he had to approve the return of the Peace Corps, which was a big ideological step for him to take. The way we did that was interesting, all of the different levers we pulled on him, aside from my conversation with him, mapping out with his minister of secondary education and him, where they would go, what parts of the country Peace Corps volunteers would go to, there has to be something in it politically for everyone without being a captive of local politics, and other ways as well.

Q: The soviets shut down their operations while you were there?

WALKER: No, but they greatly decreased them. When I was there, the soviets were building the biggest diplomatic compound they would have in Africa - a huge, enormous place, elephantine, and put a lot of money into it. This was to be their listening post for southern Africa and their operations center for southern Africa. It was an enormous thing. The soviet ambassador, who I had good relations with - we played tennis every weekend - that was his grand achievement to get this. He got artworks from an "Art in the Embassy" equivalent program and every other thing. But they pulled the plug on him. They said, "We're not going to have this. Our resources aren't going there." So, they quickly were looking for what they were going to do with this place. There was even one rumor once that South African businesspeople who wanted to look at the Malagasy market would maybe rent some of this. but, no, the soviets went down very, very quickly.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about?

WALKER: I can't think of anything. I left there in '92.

Q: During the election period?

WALKER: No, these disturbances were pretty much over.

Q: I'm talking about our election period.WALKER: Yes. The elections were in November. I came back in August or September.

Q: Then where did you go?

WALKER: Then I went to be the vice president of the National Defense University. In my Washington, I met with Eagleburger. I also met with the Director General, Ed Perkins, who I had known because when I was ambassador in Togo, he was country director for West Africa and we got to know each other. Then I became country director for West Africa when Ed went out as ambassador in Liberia. Anyhow, I came back and talked to him and he explained what he wanted me to do. I remember his saying, "You go over to NDU for one year and decide if that's where you want to hang your hat or move on to another place." I remember Larry Eagleburger saying, "Look, we're going to send you over there, but you're only going to stay a short time, about a year" and that's the understanding. I went over. It didn't work out that way. I ran up against time in grade. The only way around that, and it wasn't certain, would be another mission. But that didn't happen. But I enjoyed it. I had a good tour at National Defense University. The vice president there of the university is a little different... That is an ambassador's position and there are two other ambassadors over there. One is in the National War College. The other is the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. They are to provide a diplomatic perspective to those institutions curriculum. The vice president is to provide his diplomatic perspective to the president of the university on university-wide things. I wasn't quite sure what I was supposed to do. I met with one of our colleagues who had been vice president here before. He said, "I never was either."

Anyhow, I went over there. Very fancy accommodations, living there facing the water. I had a run-in with them because the guy who had been president was leaving and the new president didn't want to live on campus for his childrens' education. So, I was to move into that house. It shows you, when you don't know the bureaucratic politics of these things, I wrote a memo and I got the new president to write a memo about how I needed this house for representation purposes. But a two star got to the Chief of Staff of the Army first and said, "We need to keep this within the military, not let the striped pants get it." So they gave me the house next to the officers club, which is a very nice house, still on the water, but a little noisy. It was a house that George Kennan had lived in. He was the first diplomat-in-residence, as we'd call it now, at the War College. The university hadn't been formed yet. So, it was kind of interesting to be living in the house where he lived.

What was my job? It was hard to say. The faculty chiefs and deans would consult you from to time on matters of U.S. foreign policy. I didn't want to take their jobs away from them. But when I'd meet with the president on university-wide issues, which were not only the two colleges over there at the time but the other activities of the university (It has its own in-house think tank and a number of other things), I tried to build into university-wide thinking a diplomatic dimension. There were two other things over there that I did that I had a lot of fun doing. One was, I was in charge of the International Fellows. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff invites senior officers at the colonel level from 14-15 different counties to come over there for a year as students. There is an office that organizes their extracurricular activities both in Washington and trips around the country. So, I made an input into that on the sort of things I thought they should do and where they should go to learn the most about America. Then I went with them on as many of those trips as I could. The other thing I had a great interest in was a university program - so I could get involved in that, as it was university, not any of the colleges - the Capstone Program, a program in which new general and naval flag officers come in to learn how to be generals and admirals. That was fascinating. The curriculum they get is as good as any graduate level curriculum, in many ways better because they have access to senior people talking to them. I learned a lot not only about what the military does at this level... They had access to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, certainly the chiefs of all of the separate services, the highest people in the Pentagon... When we went on tour, we would go... You know who went on tour and was with them? Not only the vice president and Ambassador Walker, but retired four stars, people who had been commander of Strategic Air Command, of Atlantic Command, or European Command. They were their mentors. These were the people that would talk to them about how you act as a general, what is that dimension. When we went for their briefings abroad to be briefed by these theater command people, they were always met by the senior officer there, a four star or a three star, and not canned briefings, but, "Guys, this is the way it is." They can't speak for five minutes without their Powerpoint, but it was also a very personal briefing.

I spent so much effort trying to get a similar access at the State Department and at embassies. Early on, I was able to do that through personal contacts. I went to see Frank Wisner. I said, "This is a problem. We've got these people at the National Defense University and the War College and Industrial College of the Armed Forces who are getting this exposure to the military side and we're not getting the same level of exposure to the diplomatic side. I think we're suffering." He said, "I couldn't agree with you more. I want you to brief the Secretary," which was Eagleburger. So, Frank arranged for me to come over and give a briefing about this to the Secretary's Staff meeting. Larry said, "You're absolutely right. I want everybody around this table, all the regional secretaries and others; to give that kind of cooperation." We got it. The next Capstone group that went over there... First of all, Frank met with them up on the seventh floor in a reception and gave them a brilliant talk, as Frank can. They couldn't have been more pleased and impressed with the State Department. After that, we got them briefings by regional secretaries or deputy secretaries that were first rate and first class. You can't imagine the impression this left on guys who were going to rise, some of them, to three and four star rank with whom State would have to work very closely. So, I had a lot of fun doing that. I learned a lot about political-military affairs and that kind of perception, but had to struggle at embassies at getting a high level of briefing. But some were very cooperative. In Japan, our ambassador, who has just retired as the Brookings head, gave us a great briefing in Japan. But that wasn't always the case. I had a lot of fun over there. A lot of perks. But also made some sort of contribution. Then I got my notice, "Look, you don't get promoted to career minister from the National Defense University" and got time in grade and the other mission didn't come through, so I got my letter and I retired.

Q: What year was that?

WALKER: 1994. I was over there two years.

But before I retired, one day there came across my desk at the National Defense University this announcement... I was exploring a number of other jobs - university teaching jobs... One guy, a Japanese, who wanted to set up a new university out in South Dakota and wanted me to come up there and head it. But across my desk came this military message that the NATO Defense College in Rome was opening invitations to be the deputy commandant, the number two position. I said, "Ah, that sounds interesting. How do I do this?" I found out that nominees came in from the minister of defense, or in our case the Secretary of Defense. I said, "How do I do this? I don't know Les Aspin from a hole in the wall." By this time, Wisner had moved over to a Under Secretary position in the Department of Defense. I went to see him. He said, "You're our man. You will be good for that." So, he persuaded Secretary Aspin to write a letter of recommendation for me. Getting that vetted and approved through the Defense Department... First of all, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Colin Powell), even though he didn't know much of me, though we had met a couple of times... Then the question would be, at what level would I go over? The bureaucracy in DOD wanted to make it a GS-15 level. I thought about it and said, "I'm getting ready to retire. What the hell? Two or three years in Rome might be nice." But I must give the credit to the president of NDU, General Surgeon. Paul said, "Howard, that's ridiculous. You shouldn't go over there as a GS-15. You've been ambassador. You go over at that level..." The level was equivalent to a supergrade. Surgeon said, "This is what you have to do" and he called his contacts over there. That's the way it came in. So, I went over at the same pay scale as when I had to leave the Foreign Service. I left the Foreign Service. At that time, I was a DOD employee. That also was a very interesting thing. I learned a lot about European interests in NATO and political-military affairs there, but that is a completely other story.

Q: Let's do a sampling of it. What were some of the lessons you brought back from that, how the NATO system works at that level?

WALKER: I went over there in 1994 and NATO was still looking for a Post-Cold War mission. Senator Lugar had just written "NATO out of area, out of business." It was still a question of, there being no longer the threat of an invasion through the Folda Gap, what is its mission?" It soon was given the present of a mission in the Balkans. To see the Europeans flagling around looking for a way to deal with this, wanting on the one hand some of them to be independent of the United States... One of the central themes was transatlanticism versus a European identity. At that time, 1994-1997, there were very few, if any, who wanted to do anything to jeopardize the transatlantic relationship except for the French, but certainly not the Germans or the other small countries around. Their argument was that, "We're not sure about the Russians yet. Besides, one nice thing about the Yanks is that they're over there. They don't have this historic baggage." Anyhow, for the most part, members were strong transatlanticists with the exception of the French, still looking for a way for pride and other reason to develop a European military capability.

Q: Did you have the feeling that there was a split between the French military and the French politicians? I've often had the feeling that the French military understand the realities and the capabilities of the United States, that it's better to be with them, but the French politicians pushing this are not.

WALKER: I didn't get that at all. If I hadn't been deputy commandant, I would have walked out of some of the French military's lectures. I remember once when we took them around... All of the students at the NATO Defense College traveled in our own plane to all the NATO capitals. We had this lecture by this French four star that was so anti-American in an insulting way that if I hadn't been deputy commandant, I would have walked out. I met with the Americans later and tried to put this into some kind of perspective. In no other place did I find other than among the French any question of the importance of the transatlantic relationship... The French acknowledged the absolute importance of it as there was no serious threat they could face without the help of the Americans. Their effort was how to get that without giving the Americans leadership. But there are a lot of things we could talk about. I give two or three lectures in different places around the world on the transatlantic relationship and on NATO. But my central themes there were the importance of the transatlantic relationship to the Europeans but less important to the Americans. In some ways, we just wanted the use of their space to conduct military operations for NATO and wanted them to get out of the way and let us do the job. But sophisticated Americans came to see that you needed Europeans for more than that and we're seeing that more and more today, I hope.

Q: Maybe it's a generational thing... I belong to an older generation. But I've often seen NATO as a way, by having the U.S. there and making NATO a strong power, it keeps the French and Germans essentially together into some sort of organization that keeps them from maybe drifting apart and starting another one of these damn European civil wars.

WALKER: That was certainly one of NATO's original purposes. But they are together now in the EU in an even more important way.

Q: Maybe NATO no longer needs it... But I keep thinking that at some point peculiar leaders who can spring up in any country-WALKER: What NATO did was make it unnecessary for France or Germany to have to rearm against each other. There are other interesting things. For example, we would get briefings by our equivalent of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff of every place we went with these students. It was interesting to hear from them at that level what they thought their security risks were. Obviously, you'd hear interesting things in Greece and in Turkey. But it was interesting to hear in Northern Europe, in Norway and Denmark and places like this, how much of their strategy was based on homeland defense. They knew they couldn't project power. All they could do is do what they could in the way they did in the second world war, to fight an occupying power as best they could. Interestingly, when we started in the latter part of my tour going to what then were called Partnership for Peace countries, we went to the Baltic countries. Same thing. That's what they were talking about. They were scared to death of what Russia was doing in Chechnya as a precedent to come and do that there. They said, "What are we going to do?" What Chechnya has shown us is that homeland defense can be effective, probably the most effective thing we can do. So, that was interesting. It was interesting when we made the NATO Defense College's first trip to Moscow. We met in the war room of the Warsaw Pact and had our briefings there. It was just incredible to listen, to see all of these uniforms around there. In a personal way, it was interesting to see Moscow change from one year to the other in terms of a drab place to see the monuments where so many people died, to see on the streets of Moscow very few men my age because they were killed in World War II, to see a monument in a cemetery of people lost in Afghanistan and to hear them talk about how that was their Vietnam.

I did some other things, too, at the NATO Defense College that I'm rather proud of. One is, I sort of was in the forefront - or as the chairman of the military committee put it, I was pushing the envelope for NATO for an association in Central Asia and in the southern Mediterranean in North Africa and the Middle East. In Central Asia, I arranged to go out and give some briefings to people in Central Asia to their ministers of defense, foreign ministries, and their military institutions of higher learning on not only what the NATO Defense College does, because they were beginning to send us some students, but what NATO does and military-civilian politicians in a democracy. That was very interesting, a part of the world I didn't know and probably would have never gotten to. You can see the carpets that I brought back and so on. And then the effort that I initiated, orchestrated, and conducted in North Africa to establish a relationship between NATO - or to operationalize a relationship that NATO decided it wanted pushed by the southern Europeans with North Africa. I went down there and gave them a briefing on what the College did and discussed with them some ways in which the NATO Defense College and their own concerns could be melded. Some things came out of that that continue today, courses that they come to take at the NATO Defense College. It's my understanding from people I talk to at the College today that the new Secretary General is trying to make the NATO Defense College the center for NATO's outreach both to North Africa and increasingly to Russia. So, that was an interesting time.

I left there after three years and was very happy about that. I left my government service, came back here, and had a triple bypass heart surgery, which I'm convinced was caused not so much by the cuisine in Rome but the stress of the French in that situation. Then I started going back to what I did before I came in the Foreign Service - university teaching. Now I give courses in international relations, in diplomacy, and one in American foreign policy and in comparative government. I've given that at the American University here in Washington. I give it at two universities in South Africa - the University of Capetown and Stellenbosch University. And at John Cabbott University in Rome. It's a delightful life. And I'm doing a little lecturing on cruise ships on the side.

Q: That's great. I thank you very much.

End of interview